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IMAGINATION

SCIENCE FICTION

FEBRUARY, 1956

35¢

**SECRET OF
THE MARTIANS**
by Paul W. Fairman



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Introducing the



AUTHOR

★
Paul W. Fairman
★

WHEN the Fairman story was scheduled to lead this issue, we wrote him requesting biographical notes and a photo for this department. No answer. We wrote again—imploring. Still no answer. With the deadline hovering, we phoned him at Lake Dutchess, New York, his purported address. Now, in self defense, we can only publish the phone conversation verbatim. We lead off from Evanston.

"Hello, Paul."

"Hi, Bill. Sorry to keep you waiting. I was down at the lake. Is twenty minutes on long-distance expensive?"

"Oh, no. The phone people have to live too. Listen—what about my biog? I wrote you twice."

"Gosh— sorry. Been too busy to open my mail."

"Loaded down with assignments, eh?"

"Hell no. Busy fishing. I live on the best bass lake in all New York State. Just caught a 5 ½ pounder."

"Congratulations. Now about those biog notes—"

"Used spinning tackle—10 pound monofilament line—diamond-back frogs—"

"About those notes—"

"You buy them in jars."

"Biographical notes? In what jars?"

"No—diamond-back frogs. They're pickled and bass go crazy for them. Best bass lake in the state, Bill. You should have seen this 5 ½ pounder hit. For a minute I thought he used a baseball bat. Then he was hooked and you never saw such a

(Concluded on Page 63)

TABLE OF CONTENTS

FEBRUARY
1956

VOLUME 7
NUMBER 1

IMAGINATION
STORIES OF SCIENCE AND FANTASY

APRIL ISSUE ON SALE
JANUARY '31st

Stories

SECRET OF THE MARTIANS

(Complete Novel) by **Paul W. Fairman** 6
Were Martians dangerous? Nobody thought so—except the Earthmen who had died!

STOP, YOU'RE KILLING ME!

(Short Story) by **Darius John Granger** 50
I knew my family was trying to murder me; the trouble was—they didn't know it!

EVERYBODY'S HAPPY BUT ME!

(Short Story) by **Frederik Pohl** 64
Cheery Gum was the answer to mankind's search for Utopia—with chaotic results.

TO SERVE THE MASTER

(Short Story) by **Philip K. Dick** 78
Robots were a thing of legend, long dead; had Applequist really found one—alive?

MEETING AT THE SUMMIT

(Short Story) by **Ivar Jorgensen** 98
Great leaders must make great decisions—and this one could affect all of Earth!

THE COSMIC SNARE

(Short Story) by **Milton Lesser** 108
Liddell knew sub-space was uncharted—the obvious place for a hunted man to hide!

Features

INTRODUCING THE AUTHOR 2
THE EDITORIAL 4
FANDORA'S BOX 90

SCIENCE FICTION LIBRARY 122
LETTERS FROM THE READERS 124
TOMORROW'S SCIENCE 132

William L. Hamling
Editor

Frances Hamling
Managing Editor

W. E. Terry
Art Editor

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The Editorial

LAST September while we were having a good time living it up at the World Science Fiction Convention in Cleveland, we had occasion to sit down and have a nice chat with one of the all-time greats in science fiction, Edmond Hamilton. Aside from the purely social aspects of our conversation we talked about the "good old days" in science fiction. We asked Ed why it was that writers—and himself for one—were not turning out the epic stories so prevalent a decade and more ago. Ed came back with a rather surprised question: "Why, Bill, what editor will buy stories today on the galactic scale of adventure we used to enjoy?"

WE had a quick answer for that one: "We will, Ed. Care to get back in the groove and write science fiction as it should be written?" Ed's reply was quick and in the affirmative. Needless to say we shook hands on the spot with Ed promising to do IMAGINATION a lead novel right away.

AS this issue goes to press that a novel has come into the office. We've just finished reading it. It's not good—it's terrific! We don't mind saying that we're rushing a cover order through and revamping the next issue to include it. We're advising you right now to haunt your newsstand on January 31st

when the April issue goes on sale. And if you can't wait that long turn to page 130 and shoot in your subscription—you'll get the issue around January 10th with *Madge's* regular subscription mailing.

WE don't mind saying that having Ed Hamilton join our stable of regulars is not only good for readers of *Madge*, but for science fiction in general. You're going to be reading great stories in both *Madge* and our companion magazine, *Imaginative Tales*. Along with Hamilton we'll be presenting terrific cover stories by Geoff St. Reynard, Dwight V. Swain, and other top-notchers who know the magic formula necessary for good science fiction.

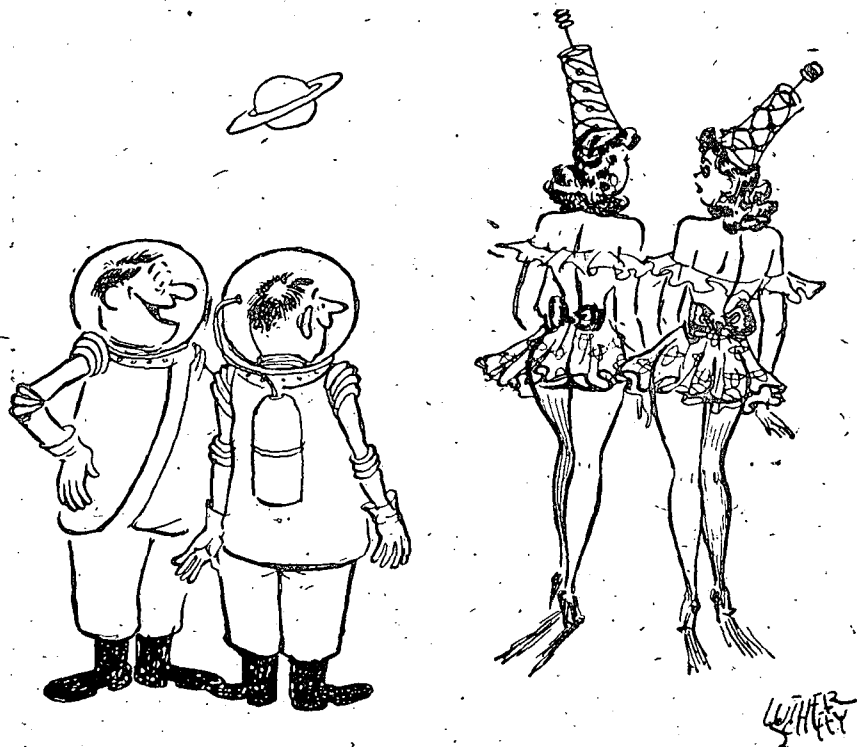
SPEAKING of top-notchers re-turning to the fold reminds us that the March issue of *Imaginative Tales* (on sale January 5th) features a new cover by Malcolm Smith, the creator of *Madge's* great photo-covers a few years back. We're after Malcom to do some more photo jobs, and he promises he will shortly. In the meantime he did manage to fit a fine painting into his busy commercial art schedule. (Don't miss the January *Tales* either if you haven't already purchased your copy—it sports a new McCauley masterpiece on the cover, not to mention Geoff St. Rey-

nard's new novel, **THE COSMIC BUNGLERS.**)

IF this editorial sounds somewhat like a promotion effort on the part of your editor we must admit that it's purely intentional. The fact is we're mighty happy with the way our magazines are progressing and we don't want you to miss a single issue from here on. (If you have there's a back issue list on page 129, so use it!)

NOTES of interest: Geoff St. Reynard—using his real name

Robert W. Krepps—has sold a movie at long last. It's his African novel, "Tell It on The Drums" and a mighty fine adventure yarn if we do say so. Apparently Hollywood agrees—to the tune of 25 g's. And Frank M. Robinson—who has appeared in *Madge* many times—has recently sold his first serious novel to a major book publisher with the magazine rights going to a top slick. All of which proves, we think, that science fiction has some pretty good boys. Naturally *Madge* will hang on to them for you . . . wll



"It's nice to see friendly faces again!"



Few colonists had seen a Martian, so why worry about them causing trouble? Yet Spencer had been killed — and Rex Tate trapped by the —

Secret Of The Martians

by

Paul W. Fairman

GORDON Malloy, Chief of Interplanetary Security, rocked back in his chair, and with seeming unconcern, looked Rex Tate over searchingly. "How was Pluto?"

"Stinking. Why we want that frozen lump in the Federation is



something I can't figure."

"Rich in minerals."

"You left me there for seven Terran months," Rex allowed criticism to sound in his voice.

This did not bother Malloy. "Good for you. Toughened you up. Safe too. Never much trouble on Pluto."

"That's why I joined up. So I'd be nice and safe."

"I've got something in mind for you."

"Where?"

"Mars. But it could be nasty so you'd better go back to Pluto."

"Try and get me on a ship. What's with Mars?"

Malloy looked for a place to put his feet and found only the top of his desk. Up there they looked like a pair of crossed banjo cases.

"I wish I knew."

"I'll go find out for you."

Malloy's eyes brooded. "The thing started as a result of privileges and stupidity, the way most things of this sort do. As you know, Mars is the only planet in the Federation without representation because the Martians refused to represent themselves. They wanted no part of the alliance." Malloy glanced up quickly. "How's your knowledge of the Martian background?"

"Sketchy. Ask me about Venus, Mercury, Neptune, Pluto. By all

means ask me about Pluto."

"We're talking about Mars. When we went up there in 2091, we found as close to a dead planet as you could want. There were people, but damned funny ones. They wouldn't fight us or they wouldn't join us. They had a kind of pride we've never been able to analyze. They just kept backing away."

"We found rich minerals and fine farm land—land that had lain fallow for ages just waiting for the plow. And plenty of water. Every spring, the ice cliffs at the poles melted on schedule and sent down the moisture for bumper crops."

"But the Martians didn't farm—they didn't mine—they didn't do anything so far as we could discover except back away into their caves and rocky fastnesses up north and give us the cold eye."

Rex knew all this but he liked to hear The Chief talk—liked to be with him as did every other agent in the Gang, so he registered bright interest and listened.

"They rebuffed all our advances and so we let them alone."

"But that happened on other planets too," Rex said innocently. "and so we went right in and got acquainted—looked in their bedrooms and their dresser drawers."

Malloy frowned slightly. "But on Mars, we didn't."

"Nope. I wonder if it could have been because we had their land and their mines and didn't think they had anything of value around their north pole?"

"You're speaking disrespectfully of the System," Malloy said in mild disapproval. "You sound as though you think we moved in and took planets over. All we did was develop latent resources—"

"—Make for the better life—"

"—Invite them to join us for a greater System—"

"—The same way the British and the Dutch and the French and the Russians did in ancient times here on Terra."

MALLOY regarded his big feet with hostility; as though they and not Rex Tate had been speaking. "Do you want this assignment, or don't you?"

"Sure I want it." Rex grinned. What other department chief would let a subordinate sound off? None except Malloy. That was one of the things that made up for the low pay.

"All right—then shut your trap and listen. As I said, the Martians backed off into those hills and caves and hung out a *Private* sign that we respected for three hundred years. Then, about six months ago, a Martologist named Spencer got tired of testing flora and fauna in the safe areas and wangled a per-

mit to penetrate the taboo areas around the pole."

Rex Tate straightened—honestly amazed. "Alone?"

"No. In the company of his twenty-year-old daughter."

"Good God! Why we wouldn't even send a nuclear battalion in there! Who issued such an insane permit?"

"That's not our business. The criminally stupid ass is being hunted from other directions, but in this age of red tape and buck-passing I doubt if he'll ever be found. Our job lies elsewhere. We've got to find out what happened to Spencer's daughter."

"What about Spencer?"

"He came back."

"Without his daughter?"

"Yes."

"I'd like to talk to the slob for a few minutes."

Malloy dropped his feet to the floor. "Come on. I'll give you a chance."

Rex followed Malloy out of the office. They got on an elevator that dropped them to a sub-basement. Malloy manned a scooter and they rode for several minutes down a long, straight corridor.

Just when Rex wondered whether or not The Chief knew where he was going, Malloy stopped the scooter in front of a closed door. He opened the door and motioned Rex

inside.

The room was small and bare, boasting as furniture, only a rectangular table in its center. On the table sat a rectangular box. Malloy pointed into the box and said, "All right—start talking."

A small chill danced down Rex's spine. In the box lay a serene-faced, middle-aged man with his hands folded over his chest. He had a rosy complexion and appeared to be napping. What an odd place for a man to sleep, Rex thought. He glanced up at Malloy. The latter said "As near as we can tell, he's been dead for four months."

"But—"

"I know. Perfectly preserved — the skin soft—all normal fluid still present in the body. Nothing's wrong with him except that he's dead."

Rex touched the soft tissue. It was cool. "How can you figure the time?"

"He came in on a food freighter—in a cargo of potatoes that was sent from a farmer's market at a place called New Iowa in the heart of the Martian farm belt."

"Not far from the forbidden polar circle," Rex said.

"I thought you didn't know anything about Mars."

"When things were dull on Pluto, I studied timetables."

"That's interesting. I'll issue

them to all agents."

"Of course you've got no proof that the body was put aboard at Iowa."

"Yes we have. The hold was locked and sealed there. The body was inside. The seal was unbroken."

The closed eyes of Professor Spencer made Rex almost as uncomfortable as the closed lips. "All right. I've got the picture. What do we do? Send in a battalion to question the Martian taste in gift packages?"

"We've got no proof the Martians did this."

"Who else?"

"Maybe some transplanted Terran farmer took up taxidermy on the side."

"The odds are way against it."

"So are the odds against a solar eclipse, but they happen."

"Then we make no hostile gestures?"

"Not until we know the score. That's what I want you to do, Rex—go out to Mars and find the score."

"Okay, Chief." Rex took a last look at the body. "And if I come back in that shape, check my pockets. There might be time to write a note."

"Don't be such a pessimist," Malloy growled.

* * *

(From the diary of Tommy Wilks)

The first thing you miss on Mars is the green. The things hardest to get used to are the reds and the yellows and the tired browns. Never is there any bright rich green filled with the promise of spring as I grew used to in Kentucky back on Terra. Because this is a dying planet and even when the Martian spring does come, there is a feeling of tiredness in the air.

And the warm rain on your face. You miss that too because there is no rain on Mars. You keep looking at the sky, hunting for the big black thunderheads that sent people running for cover back in Kentucky. You look and look until your eyes ache and even the sting of icy cold rain would be nice.

The water here is all underground and in the canals. It is good water, running down through the bogs and the rivers and the marshes in spring when the big northern ice cliffs melt.

It is very funny about the ice cliffs. Up there it snows in the winter I guess because they get higher and higher until they are like mountains. Then in spring, they melt in a few days. Nobody knows much about the ice mountains because they are in the middle of the forbidden polar zone. It is said there are Martian people up in the forbidden circle but I don't think so. Because why would anybody

live in such a place when the level lands and the old sea bottoms and the canals are down here!

Anyhow, we never go there. The only Martians I ever saw are the ones that come by like tramps asking for food. We always give it to them because they are always hungry and we don't want any trouble. And then there is Barzoo. He was here when we came. He lives in a little stone house out beyond the potato fields. All Martians have hard brown skins—almost like shells—and instead of white in their eyes, like Terrans, they have light green, and the pupils are always jet black. Looking at a Martian is a little hard to get used to at first but after while it's all right.

Dad and Mom made me stay away from Barzoo at first, but he was harmless and now they let me visit him. We talk but I can only understand a little of what he says and he can't understand much Terran. He is a funny man, Barzoo. He never smiles and gives you the idea he has only contempt for Terrans. But he takes me and shows me where the big gadfish hide in holes in the canals and how to catch them with a white pebble on the end of a line.

Nobody minds Barzoo.

I am Thomas Wilks Junior, but everybody calls me Tommy. I am fifteen years old and I like to write

and someday I will go to Terra to some big university and learn to do it well and then I will write stories all about Mars for the Terrans to read.

My father is Thomas Wilks Senior. My mother is Lucy Wilks. My sister is Jean Wilks. Father brought us to Mars when the Federation opened this land. It is very easy to grow good crops here—very big potatoes—because Dad says ages ago it was farmed by the Martians and the fields and the canals are all here. We put the potatoes on big space freighters that take them back to Terra. All the farmers send their potatoes in the big freighters and they all talk about going back themselves after they get rich out here but I have a feeling very few of them will go. There is something about this planet that grows on you. It's awfully cold a lot of the time and you have to learn to walk carefully or you go right up in the air. But you get used to it. And two moons instead of one.

I like keeping a diary because someday I will need what I'm writing now for my stories about Mars and will become very famous and live in a high tower in Kentucky. Or maybe I will build a tower right here on Mars.

* * *

(Wednesday)

We have a new man working for us. He came in on the last freighter. He is very tall and has yellow hair and he is different from most men that come here to work. Most of them go to the saloon when the ship sets down, but this one went to the candy store and that was where I met him.

He bought me some ice cream and we talked about Mars. I guess I did most of the talking. I told him all about the farm and about Barzoo and the gadfish you catch with a pebble. He seemed very interested in Barzoo and said he'd like to meet him.

I told him if he worked for Dad I would introduce him to Barzoo and he said all right. Which Dad slapped me on the back for later because help is hard to get and he gave me credit for talking the yellow haired man into working for us.

His name is Rex Tate and we didn't ask him how he happened to come out here. We're just glad that he did because help is a problem.

After this I guess the farmers will check the candy store too when they come into Iowa along with the saloon. But who would expect to find a grown man like Rex Tate in a candy store? He's different than the other workers who come here. A lot more intelligent. I like to talk to him.

REX Tate, clad in a Martian fox jacket against the sharp winter air, worked at a strand of broken fence on the far north line of the Wilks farm.

He straightened and looked off across the dull brown plains. The experts said this had all been ocean once; back in the days when Terra was a seething, untenanted ball of hot lava. Rex wondered how right they were.

One thing was sure. A no more dull, drab, peaceful landscape could possibly be imagined. He turned to look northward toward the high ice cliffs of the polar circle. The thin air made distances deceptive and the cliffs looked to be hanging almost over Rex's head. But he knew they were many miles away.

He frowned. This had seemed the logical place to start his investigation, yet what evil could lurk among these simple energetic Terrans? Such an act as had been perpetrated upon Professor Spencer was certainly beyond their ability to conceive, and Margo Spencer was certainly not hidden among them.

Only one thing kept him in this vicinity and it was indeed a frail thread. The Martian hermit young Wilks had told him about. He wanted to look the man over but had delayed, feeling that even though the lead seemed hardly to be taken seriously, caution was still

the better part of wisdom.

Rex turned now to watch big Tom Wilks stride across the frozen brown moss of the pasture. Terran cattle, Rex had learned, thrived on the prickly stuff.

Tom Wilks had a big, cordial face, roughened and seamed by the Martian cold. He slapped Rex on the shoulder and said, "Well, how do you like this outpost of civilization?"

"It's different—I'll say that."

"Hope you grow to like it. A man can get rich out here."

"I don't doubt it."

"You aren't like the others," Wilks said.

"Thank you."

"I mean most of the help we get out here are drifters looking for a stake. You could easy get yourself some land—make a go of it. We need good solid men out here. Now I've got a fine looking daughter—" Wilks paused. "Guess maybe I'm going too fast."

"Jean's a fine girl, but you don't know much about me, Mr. Wilks."

"The name's Tom and don't forget it. And don't think I'm going to nose into your business until you're ready to tell us. We're inclined to take people at face-value. We consider 'em first-rate until they prove otherwise. You might say we kind of follow our instincts."

Rex gave him a quick smile.

"One thing puzzles me."

"What's that?"

"How come there are no Martians working for you? The pay is good. I'd think they'd be swarming around."

"You don't know much about Mars, son. I've got a hunch there aren't many Martians."

When Rex started to reply, Tom Wilks waved a hand. "Oh, I know the Federation experts tell us different—say they live up there under the ice cap, but I don't believe it. A few of them would wander down."

"Young Tommy tells me you've got one around. A character named Barzoo."

"Uh-huh. God knows where he came from or what he wants here. Doesn't care to work a lick."

This, Rex realized, was Tom Wilks' basis of judging a man. A worker rated high with him. A fairly presentable worker rated high enough to be considered for his daughter's hand. Not a bad way to look at it at that, Rex thought.

"I'd like to meet this Barzoo."

"Tommy'll take you out there any time you say."

"He goes alone?"

"The old coot's harmless. Looked him over myself. He takes the youngsters fishing."

"Characters like that interest me."

"Well, finish this fence now and then get back to the house. Jean's fixed up something a little special for supper. Got her hair and face all shined up too. I wonder why?"

Wilks winked and strode off about his business, leaving Rex to wonder about Jean. He'd have to be a little careful there. She was a nice kid. There'd be no problem, though, because he wouldn't be around long enough. He hooked the last strand of wire into place and headed for the house...

JEAN Wilks was a lithe, slim, dark-haired girl with laughing blue eyes and red, almost sensuous lips. When Rex got to the house she was there to open the door. She wore a close-fitting blouse, slacks, and a frilly postage-stamp apron. There was welcome in her smile and her eyes spoke quite frankly. They said, *I'm after you.*

"Come on in and shuck your coat," Jean said. "I'll bet you're frozen."

"Only my fingers."

Jean took his hand in hers and rubbed briskly. Her eyes teased. "I thought you were too hot-blooded to let a little cold snap chill you."

"I'm used to a hot sun."

She could change mood quickly. Her smile slipped away. "Where did you come from, Rex?"

As he hesitated she put a quick

finger over his lips. "Don't tell me. Sorry I pried. We aren't that way here on Mars—really." She moved away from him. "How do you like my apron! It's supposed to show you how domestic I am."

"You did the cooking tonight?"

"Uh-huh. Mom and Dad and Tommy just left. They went to New Iowa for dinner with some friends. I'm in charge of the feed bag."

"Swell—let's open it up."

Supper over, Rex helped Jean with the dishes. He was struck by the domestic situation into which this case had brought him. He felt guilty—as though he were trespassing on the hospitality of these fine people. And fine people they were—of that he was assured. Now only remained to discover by what weird turn of circumstances the perfectly preserved body of Professor Spencer had been placed in a sealed potato hold in New Iowa.

"The ships that go out of here," Rex said. "Do they all set down in New Iowa—on the field there?"

They were having coffee in the living room. Jean had removed her apron and sat close to Rex on the lounge. Her hair was soft and gleaming in the light of the open flame from the old-fashioned fireplace.

"Usually," she said. "except during heavy harvest time. Then they

put down wherever they can. We've had them parked in our lower pasture. You see we like to get the crops away as quick as we can and the freight company always sends enough ships to accomodate use because the run is so profitable."

"The lower pasture. Isn't that where this Barzoo fellow hangs-out?"

Jean shuddered. "He's awful. I suppose I shouldn't feel this way about him because he's harmless and very good to Tommy. But that dull-brown hide—his funny eyes."

"I'd like to see what he looks like. I'll have to ask Tommy to take me down there."

Jean regarded him thoughtfully. "I'll take you down."

"But why should you—?"

She shrugged. "I don't seem to be doing very well by firelight. We have two moons up here. They should be twice as hard to resist as one."

Rex was playing it straight all the way through—which meant playing it dumb. "But it's very cold out."

"Pretty cold in here, too. Let's get started."

REX put on his jacket, wondering what he was going to do with this girl. She appeared from her bedroom wearing a white parka that made her look doubly attrac-

tive. "It's only a ten-minute walk. And the cold isn't as penetrating here as on Terra."

They hiked along, hand-in-hand, under the two racing Martian moons. The air was sharp, stinging, like heady wine. Rex felt as though he could have jumped clear up to where Terra hung close and beautiful in the night sky. This, he decided, was a wonderful planet, a wonderful country, a great place to settle down and build something—raise children. Bodies in shipping cases seemed far away and unreal.

Jean's hand, warm in his own, squeezed suddenly as though she sensed his thoughts. She glanced at him, her eyes rich with meaning. Then she broke away and ran on ahead toward an oddly shaped monolith of a hut further down the pasture.

As Rex hurried forward, he studied the stone hutch. It was obviously very old—something left over from a lost and forgotten civilization. It impressed him as having been built as both a shelter and a symbol. There appeared to be undecipherable meaning in the formation of it—blurred now by the wear of centuries.

Jean stopped beside the narrow entrance. "He's not here," she said. Rex pushed his head inside, bent forward to peer about the small in-

terior. It was smooth, unadorned cone-shaped.

He took a step forward heard a quick laugh and tripped over Jean's extended foot. He grabbed as he went down—inside the shelter—and caught Jean's arm. He dragged her with him and they went down in a heap. He was looking into her fur-framed face, into her eyes. She had stopped laughing. Neither of them spoke during several quick breaths.

Then Jean said, "I guess you think I'm pretty forward, don't you?"

"I think you're pretty wonderful."

"I think maybe we're different up here—a lot different than we'd be on Terra."

Her breath was warm in Rex's face. "How do you figure that?"

"We're more elemental out here, I guess. We're more afraid of letting life get past us. I want you so bad it hurts. I want to marry you and have your children and I'm afraid of not letting you know it."

Her mouth was on his; her body through the soft fur of their clothing was warm and rounded against him. His blood was pounding and he was conscious of two things. First, this intoxicating girl in his arms. Second, the fact that the slab against which he was pressed had loosened and turned; that it

had moved on a hinge of some kind and he had to hold tight to Jean to keep from falling through.

Then he became aware of a third presence. Just outside a figure loomed; a hideous looking man with a brown, scarred hide. A man with eyes that seemed to hold all the hate in the universe . . .

* * *

(From the Diary of Tommy Wilks)
(Saturday)

They're gone—Jean and Rex Tate. Nobody around here knows what to think because there is no place to go. No ships have come in or gone out. Everybody is talking about it. Some people say Rex Tate had a ship and that he put Jean in it and took her away. But how can that be true? Where could anybody hide a ship around here? The country is flat as far as you can see. They say he must have had a ship hidden up in the ice country—in the forbidden circle and he took her up there.

But that is crazy too. They were having supper here last night when Mom and Dad and I went to the Parker's for supper. They weren't here when we got back and none of the cars or horses are gone so how could they have got away?

They say he took Jean away, but I wonder if it wasn't the other way around? Jean was in love with him—she wanted to mar-

ry him—and I wonder if maybe she didn't take HIM away? But that's foolish, too. There was no place for her to take him or him to take her. It certainly is a mystery. We haven't had so much excitement since we came to Mars. Pöope coming and going—men riding off in bunches hunting under every piece of moss as though they'd turned to midgets and were hiding there. It's all very silly. But Mom is sick about it. She's in bed and Mrs. Parker is taking care of her. The men swear they'll catch Rex and kill him wherever they find him. They say he dragged Jean away to have her for himself. I don't think so—not for that reason, anyhow. I know how Jean felt about him and girls in love are funny. He wouldn't have had to drag her anywhere. That was how Jean felt about him.

It's all very strange. And very lonesome here with Dad gone off with the hunting party and Mom under sedatives. I'm going to ask Barzoo what he thinks about it.

* * *

(Sunday)

I've learned something important and I don't know what to do about it. I went to Barzoo's hutch to find him but he was not there. I waited around a while and then, while I was looking inside, I thought I saw something funny a-

bout the wall. One section of it looked different than the others. It wasn't dirty along the bottom. It looked as though there was a crack there. I examined it and found it moved on a hinge. I pushed it back and everything was dark behind it. I listened for a while and then thought I heard a sound inside as though somebody had taken a step.

I got scared and dropped the stone back into place and began to run. I ran all the way home to tell Dad about it because that must be where Rex and Jean went. There can't be any other place.

But Dad isn't here and I can't tell Mom. She's too sick and I'd only disturb her . . .

It's been an hour now. Dad still isn't home. I've done some thinking. Why did I run away from the hutch? There isn't anything there to be afraid of. When you think it over, it's logical that Barzoo would have a place underneath the hutch to keep warm on cold winter nights. Even if his hide is thick, he still needs shelter. And why should he have told me about it? It's his private business and I never asked him. I'll bet he would have told me if I'd asked him.

I'm going to wait another half hour for Dad. Then, if he isn't back, I'll go to the hutch with a flashlight and see what's under it.

Maybe everybody is right about Rex. Maybe he's got Jean down there.

But if he has I'll bet she isn't trying very hard to get away . . .

The half hour's up. Here I go . . .

* * *

"SO that's the story," Rex said. "Now you know who I am and how I happened to come to New Iowa."

Jean twisted her arms against the thongs that bound her wrists and said, "I think you were stupid not to tell us and let us try to help you."

"But I was moving in the dark entirely unsure of myself. I had to look around and find out—"

"Oh, I see. You suspected us. You thought we were capable of murdering a man and putting his body in a box and shipping it back to Terra with our potatoes!"

"I thought no such thing!"

They spoke openly, convinced that the five Martians who were their captors could not understand Terran. They had been at the hutch when Rex and Jean got there—four of them—crouched behind the wall. When Barzoo arrived, just as Rex tilted the section of wall, they had seized the two Terrans and tied their hands. There had been nothing Rex could do, hampered as he was by Jean lying in his arms.

Rex's thoughts had been the bit-terest of gall as he forecast his report to The Chief—that was, if he lived long enough to submit a report:

I was necking with a local farmer's daughter in the stone hutch of a Martian character. I had every reason to be suspicious of this Martian and should have been on my toes when he arrived. Instead, I was on my back, kissing this aforementioned local daughter and this Martian and four of his friends took us both. No credit to them, though. In the shape we were in, a crippled blind man could have taken us. Any further orders, Chief?

The Martians had ignored his pleas that they leave Jean behind, or perhaps the Martians did not even understand him.

They had been led off down a long, dark tunnel. So far as Rex and Jean were concerned, their next step could have almost dropped them off into oblivion but the Martians were sure-footed and seemed to be entirely familiar with the pitch-black tunnel.

They walked for what seemed hours before a light showed in the distance. Another hour brought them to the spot where a dusty overhead bulb glowed dimly. It appeared to have been there untouched for centuries because the ceiling was damp and calcium-bearing

droplets had almost covered it. Yet it glowed bravely.

Here, the two Terrans were allowed to rest. One of the Martians dug into a small opening in one wall and brought forth a quantity of grayish substance which he offered them — holding it toward their mouths with his filthy hand. They turned their faces away and he made no further effort to feed them.

They were ignored—left sitting on a ledge while the Martians gorged down the food. Afterward, the one Jean designated as Barzoo, looked up suddenly as though a thought had come. He talked to one who had finished eating and was wiping his hands on his dull brown hide.

Rex tried to fathom Barzoo's words. Familiar with languages and dialects the System over, he got some of Barzoo's meaning. The Martian leader was worried about the condition in which the hutch floor had been left. Perhaps the wall-section had been left tilted. After a while, the other Martian got to his feet and trotted back through the darkness along the tunnel through which they had come.

AFTER the Martian left, Barzoo wiped his mouth with the back of his hand and motioned Rex and

Jean to get up and move into a passage to their right.

"How much further can he take us?" Jean asked. "After the first drop back at the hutch, it seems to me the tunnel has been level."

"A floor can be deceptive. We could have been moving down a gradual slope for miles."

Jean said nothing. The going was easier now, this tunnel being lighted at intervals by the strange overhead bulbs. Rex asked, "Are you sore at me for what happened back at the farm? For not telling you the truth?"

"No. We're in too much trouble to waste time being angry. What's done is done. Only the future is important now."

Rex could have made his self-reproach vocal but he felt that too would be a waste of time. He said, "Didn't anybody—any of you Terrans know about the opening in that hutch?"

"I'm sure no one did — except perhaps Tommy." She thought that over and added, "No—that's absurd. If Tommy had known it he wouldn't have been able to keep it to himself."

"Maybe they'll hunt around and find it."

"Maybe—but I hope they don't."

"Why not?"

"If they find the opening they'll come looking for us. These Mar-

tians are hostile. Some of our men might be killed and they have wives and families."

Jean made Rex feel ashamed of himself. "Don't worry. I'll get you out of here."

She glanced up at him. Her chin trembled slightly as she sought to stiffen it.

At that moment they walked into a larger tunnel. There were more overhead bulbs here and a ribbon of narrow-gauge track stretching off into the distance.

"A railroad!" Rex exclaimed.

"I wonder where it goes?"

"I've got a hunch we're going to find out."

One of the Martians had gone around a shoulder of the tunnel. There was a whining sound. He returned in the driver's seat of a small rail car. Barzoo motioned the Terrans into one of the seats. The other Martians got in behind them. The driver pulled a throttle. The whining sound increased and the car moved off down the tracks.

Rex listened for a time, inspected the portion of the car within range of his eyes, then said, "I wonder what kind of power this thing uses?"

Jean did not answer. Her head had dropped to his shoulder. She was asleep. He settled himself, forming a pocket with his body so she could rest against him with the seat

supporting her. Behind him the eyes of the three Martians, including Barzoo, had also closed. Rex wondered if the driver was asleep also.

The car rolled on in a monotonously straight line, mile after mile. Rex realized he had discovered a civilization under Mars, the existence of which was unknown on Terra. He knew that none of the authorities, or experts suspected anything so civilized as a railroad in the forbidden polar lands. At best they thought the territory inhabited by hardy bands of hostile, backward ice dwellers.

This was indeed a great discovery he told himself bitterly. Of course neither he nor Jean would live to reveal it, but they could die happy, knowing they were great explorers.

He grew tired of excoriating himself. The passing overhead lights had a hypnotic effect. He closed his eyes and slept . . .

FANTON, son of Fandor of the Bantarks— last great ruling dynasty of Mars— lay sick and dying in a foul cell under the Amphitheater of the Gods. He was old and tired and ready to die, yet he longed for survival because his work was not yet done.

For two centuries, Fanton had ruled as Lord of the North Hemisphere. He had seen the great prosperity of the planet even under

conditions whereby the scientists of his father had foreseen the planet's death. He had been there at the birth of their scientific magic.

Fandor, his father, had been a wise and gentle ruler. When the Terrans came in their great ships, Fandor had prevailed upon the Council and a policy of cautious retreat had been instituted. Fandor advocated this because he knew the Martian science was no match for that of the Terrans. Not that the wizardry of the Martian scientists was any less great, but they had bent their efforts in peaceful directions while the Terrans came with huge warships and no end of armament.

So the Martians, under Fandor, had retreated quietly to the north allowing the Terrans to move onto the planet. This policy was much despised by the young and the hot-headed who would have preferred to meet the invader face to face and die in battle if need be. But the majority of the Council was old and weary as was Fandor, and they prevailed.

Then Fandor felt he had lived long enough and refused to enter the place of Eternal Strength— greatest miracle of Martian science. He died peacefully and Fanton put on his royal robes.

Now those robes had been torn from his body and he had been re-

fused access to the place of Eternal Strength. Pandek, the fiery young Councilman had overthrown him and assumed power and the younger Martians were preparing to sweep down over the planet and slay the unsuspecting Terrans.

They would be slaughtered of course. This, Fanton knew, because the Martian weapons were puny, but there would be death and fiery agony before the Terrans finally won.

Many times, in his heart, Fanton had wondered if the policy of the old ones had been wise. Fanton was a scholar. The books of the Terrans had been smuggled into the north country. He had learned the language and read the books and there was one Terran writer of whom he never tired; a genius named William Shakespeare. In his great play called *Julius Caesar*, Shakespeare had said: *There is a tide in the affairs of men which taken at its flood leads on to fortune.*

Lying in his filthy cell, Fanton's mind was cloudy. He was not sure if those were the exact words but the point was clear. Perhaps there had been a time in the affairs of the Martians when the tide of fortune was at its flood—when they could have won out over the Terrans. But that time had certainly long-passed and if their present

plight was the result of the old mistakes, then so be it. There was still no justification for mass suicide.

So Fanton did not want to die. His work remained undone. Above his cell, in the Amphitheater of the Gods, Pantek was fomenting a kettle of hell's brew. Already, they had used the Place of Eternal Strength in a fiendish manner—desecrated it—and now they deprived their Emperor of its healing magic.

Fanton realized the die was cast. He himself had been removed from the stage. Mad new actors bent upon destruction were reading their lines.

He, Fanton, was finished . . .

TOMMY Wilks walked a long way down the dark passage, his light picking a path through the gloom. He knew he had already gone further than he should but always there was the temptation to see what lay just ahead.

And nothing was ever there. Only the sinister black passage leading onward. He explored another length, then stopped. This was far enough. What if he had unknowingly turned into a by-passage? Suppose he would miss the intersection on the way back?

Thoughts such as these flared into his mind to bring a sudden

sense of entrapment. The walls seemed to be closing in on him. He turned to retrace his steps.

Then he froze. Sound. A far-away, echoing sound. The soft tap of footsteps. But coming closer. Tommy threw his light on down the tunnel. He strained his eyes ahead looking for whatever or whoever made the sound.

It was louder now and he realized, too late, that his flash was on—guiding the menace—serving as a beacon. He clawed at the switch but his fingers were clumsy thumbs. When he finally got the light out, the footsteps had increased to a running tempo. He turned and fled blindly back along the tunnel. He had not taken ten steps when he tripped and fell. He struggled to his feet in panic. Too late. Hard, rough hands were upon him.

He fought but his struggles were useless . . .

TWICE, Rex had tried to maneuver the Martians into removing the thongs from his wrists. At the end of the rail line there was a pool of water fed by a spring. He motioned toward his wrists and signified thirst. One of the Martians callously threw water in his face until he was gasping for breath. His second attempt failed also and now he and Jean were being led through a shining marble corridor

the like of which he had never seen even in the finer buildings on Terra. What manner of world, he wondered, was hidden here under the northern Martian ice cap?

But the wonder in store made the corridor look like a tunnel clawed through bare earth. It was a huge amphitheater into which he and Jean were rudely shoved. They stood frozen, their perilous position momentarily forgotten.

"Did you ever see anything like it?" Jean gasped.

"It must be an illusion of some kind. I can't believe it really exists."

The floor upon which they stood was of pure, glittering gold. It stretched away in shining glory to a wall of crystal—a window so high and vast Rex could not conceive it as standing alone. Surely it had to fall by its own weight.

It dwarfed a high, curved dais along which sat a line of richly robed Martians. In the center of the dais was an elevated throne upon which sat a scowling young Martian.

But the thing that caught and held the two Terrans were the towering cliffs of ice framed in the great window as by a master painter. Rex and Jean were pushed forward. As they came near the high throne, the young Martian smiled coldly as he noted the direction of

their eyes.

He broke the silence. "You seem to admire our view."

"You speak Terran." Rex said, surprise in his words.

"A source of amazement to you, no doubt. You who consider us a mob of imbeciles cringing up here in the ice floes."

"Whoever you are, I'm afraid you're in trouble. We aren't used to being hauled around like criminals."

"Then it's time you got used to it."

"Who are you?"

"I am Pandek, ruler of all Martians. Down on your knees!"

Rex and Jean were hurled roughly to the floor. Rex lowered his head and whispered to Jean, "Take it easy. We've got to feel our way and wait this out." To Pandek, he said, "Is this the way you're in the habit of receiving ambassadors from friendly nations?"

"Friendly? That from you who have kicked and despised us for hundreds of years?" Pandek's rage was heightening with each word. "You and your arrogant army of invaders? You who treated us with the patronizing kindness you reserve for amiable dogs?"

"We came in friendship—"

"—with armed space ships at your back—uninvited—unwelcome—smiling like the hypocrites you

are!"

"Those entrusted with government on Terra would be happy to hear that you are willing to come forth and negotiate," Rex said.

Pandek arose from his throne, his brown face mottled with rage. "Negotiate for what is already ours? Put our stamp of approval on your conquest of our planet?"

Rex saw that further words were useless. He stood silent until the ruler's anger subsided. Then he asked, "What do you plan to do with us?"

"Kill you—as we will kill every Terran on our world."

HE eyed Rex for signs of fear. When they did not appear he seemed mildly disappointed. When he spoke again it was in a quieter tone: "But first I would have you see a little of what Martian science is like. I would have you know how far ahead of the Terran bunglers our scientists were even a thousand years ago. I would have you know by what power Mars will again come into its own."

"I would like to see the work of your scientists." Conceit was obviously one of this ruler's weaknesses, Rex decided. He hoped others would reveal themselves.

"Very well, Terran. You shall see a part of the miracle concerning which you Terrans have won-

dered for years; the miracle by which your stolen lands below the polar circle have been watered and kept lush."

"The ice cliffs?"

"Yes. I cannot show you the process whereby the rains and the snows are created and drawn to the pole each season—how these great cliffs of ice are built over the winter months. But I can reveal to you the most spectacular part of the process—the melting of the ice cliffs."

In spite of their predicament, Rex was vitally interested. Jean, also. He glanced at her and saw the intent look on her face.

Pandek picked up a device at his elbow—obviously some sort of a telephone and spoke into it. His words were low and undistinguishable. But the results were almost instantaneous.

A far-away hum was heard, greatening in volume as from the release of sudden power. A faint blue light appeared, glowing the ice at the base of the cliffs. The color shot up through the ice mass—clear blue—as new colors were added to that at the base. Red, yellow, purple, crimson—so bright they seemed to sear Rex's eyes. Then they too started climbing up through the solid ice.

A deep rumbling was heard. Pandek said, "Your Terran scien-

tists have not even begun to realize the power of nuclear fission. Two thousand years ago our scientists were ages ahead of them."

Pandek said more, but his words were drowned in thunder from the crashing of ice cliffs beyond the great window. Huge cataracts were even now pouring down the walls of melting ice. Both Rex and Jean stood awed at the sight of such vast and instantaneous destruction.

Pandek smiled his cold smile. The thunder subsided somewhat and Pandek said, "I see you are impressed. I would welcome your comments." He was enjoying himself.

The display had astounded Rex but the expression on his face remained cold. "I imagine you were responsible for sending the body of Professor Spencer back to Terra."

PANDEK paused at Rex's quick change of subject. "Yes, a fitting reminder to the Terrans that we aren't animals to be gaped at."

"On the contrary—an indication that you *are* animals."

Pandek half-rose from the throne. "You'll die a little more horribly than I'd planned for that remark."

"Perhaps I will but the fact remains that you're mad to think you can stand against Terra. Your scientific know-how is admittedly

great, but it is not geared for war."

"You think not?"

"I'm certain of it. I'm also sure of another thing."

"What else are you sure of?"

"That you have no scientists."

"Then how—?"

"You had them—ages ago—and they built well—so well that their work has survived to this day. What you have here was built by geniuses for fools to operate. I'm certain all you do is press switches and reap the benefits of work done by long-dead brains in another age."

The darkening of Pandek's face told Rex his words had cut deep. In a way, he felt sorry for the Martian. A hate-filled, envy-charged man seeking to vent his rage in mad ways.

If carried to their ultimate, his acts could only lead to the destruction of his people at the hands of the Terrans. But this made the situation no less perilous for Rex and Jean and other Terrans on Mars.

"You hold a Terran citizen," he said. The daughter of Professor Spencer. Is she still alive?"

Pandek was again enjoying himself. "Oh, very much so." His smile held some hidden meaning as he said, "A trifle embarrassed, perhaps—at the moment—but alive and healthy."

"I demand you return her to her own people."

"You demand? I admire your courage.—"

"What do you plan to do with her?"

Pandek's Martian eyes grew speculative. "She fits into my plans as does the young woman at your side. A new day will dawn upon Mars soon, a reversion to the old days when Mars was a virile, fighting planet. Then, there was less science and more emotion. The masses were whipped to a fighting frenzy by supplications to the old gods." Pandek grinned wickedly. "Human sacrifices were a part of those supplications. Nothing stirs the people like the public sacrifice of a beautiful female with all its pomp and splendor. It stirs them deeply."

"The thought of it stirs you deeply, you mean. You're mad. You're a dangerous maniac. I can only hope your own people put you down in time."

With a howl of rage, Pandek leaped from his throne. He drew a short ornamental sword from his belt and swung it viciously against the side of Rex's head. Rex went down like an ox felled for slaughter.

Jean screamed . . .

THE rough-skinned Martian who subdued Tommy Wilks, pressed him against the wall of the tunnel and used Tommy's own

flashlight for purposes of inspection. He growled a few unintelligible words and seemed to be debating a problem.

Tommy watched him silently, warily, without fear. He had ceased struggling because it was useless but his mind was alert.

He had no way of knowing the Martian was in a quandry. He had been sent to check the tunnel entrance in the stone hutch on the Wilks farm. But he had come upon Tommy halfway to his objective. Should he take Tommy to his superiors, or finish his original mission? It was indeed a problem.

The Martian was not too bright. Also, he was lazy. The capturing of this Terran changed things, he told himself. He would take the boy to the terminal. Then perhaps something would happen so he would not have to take the long walk back through the tunnel. Perhaps he would be honored for his capture and another would be sent to the hutch.

This hope brightened him as he took Tommy roughly by the arm and hauled him toward the railroad. Tommy was not a difficult prisoner. They moved swiftly. But the boy was breathing heavily when he was pushed into one of the cars and the Martian took the controls.

Tommy rested, awaiting his

chance. He had by no means given up hope. It was just a matter of the Martian easing up on his arm. At least that would be the first step. Tommy was glad the Martian had been contemptuous and not tied him up.

The car rolled smoothly along its tracks; faster than the one used to transport Rex and Jean because the Martian transporting Tommy had always liked speed. He liked it so well he opened the car to its greatest capacity and at one point had to release Tommy's arm in order to put both hands on the throttle.

Tommy struck instantly without thought as to the outcome—only with hope. And his hopes were fulfilled. He hurled himself against the Martian with both fists extended. They hit hard brown hide just below the Martian's right shoulder and sent him off balance. The Martian snatched at Tommy while trying to regain his equilibrium and learned the folly of attempting two things at once.

But too late. He teetered, howled dismally, and pitched in front of the racing car. It hit him with a dull thud, killing him instantly. But his dead bulk also wreaked a kind of vengeance on the car, lifting it from its tracks and sending it skidding along on its side.

Tommy had been thrown clear.

and as he hit the wall of the tunnel he knew he was done for. Every bone in his body snapped. Every ounce of his flesh crackled with pain. He fell to the tracks and lay dying.

But the process was slower than he anticipated. A full minute passed and he had not yet expired. This puzzled him. How could you live with all this pain? With every bone broken? It just didn't make sense. Tommy waited.

But death proved remarkably stubborn. It refused to drop its black mantle over his tortured body. Finally Tommy moved an arm—a foot—a leg. Odd. They all worked. He got to his feet. He conceded that maybe the agony was not as great as it had first seemed. Now that he could breathe again, things were better. There was only one bad place, really; a vicious bloody abrasion along his right forearm.

The lights of a platform loomed ahead. Tommy crawled over the car and stepped gingerly around the body of the dead Martian. Then he hurried forward and climbed on the deserted platform.

Here the light was better and he examined his arm. It was an angry, bloody mass but the blood was oozing out rather than flowing. No deep wound had been suffered but it hurt like fury. He could

not bear to have anything touch it so he put his arm out at an awkward angle and left it there while he looked around, wondering what this place was and also how hard you had to get hit and how much it had to hurt before you got killed.

HIS ponderings were interrupted by the sound of footsteps. In the face of this, there was nothing to do, he decided, but pick a direction and run. Back up the tracks? No. While the lights from the overhead bulbs were dim, they would still reveal him at quite a distance. The platform had two exits. The running footsteps were approaching along one of these. That left the other. Tommy plunged into it and ran.

He ran a long way and his surroundings changed swiftly. The rail platform had been crude and uninspiring but now he was fleeing along a beautiful marble corridor.

He stopped for breath, backed into a partially secluded niche and admired his surroundings. Was this the kind of place the Martians lived in? It certainly didn't fit into his preconceived notions of a place where backward ice people would dwell.

As his breathing lessened, a tantalizing sound asserted itself upon his ears. An odd, singing sound, both pleasant and mysterious. He wondered where it came from.

He peeked out into the corridor and found it deserted.

The singing sound. As he walked back along the corridor, it diminished. He turned and retraced his steps. The sound greatened until he came to an archway in one wall of the corridor. The sound obviously emanated from that direction. The archway was supported by gleaming marble pillars and as Tommy passed between them, the singing sound rose to a crescendo that vibrated deliciously against his nerve centers.

Then he saw it. A beautiful, domed room that gave a first impression of being a public bath of some sort. But there was no water, only brilliant, breathtaking color; all the gorgeous colors of the rainbow dancing down from the ceiling in beams of crystal clarity. There was sound and color — and something else; a subtle something that made Tommy very happy; excitedly happy in a way he had never before experienced.

He moved forward, completely engrossed in his new surroundings. He moved in under the shower of color and a feeling of ecstatic exhilaration went through him. It was wonderful.

Then he froze. Not twenty feet away stood two Martians clad in rich metal harness and holding long golden spears. Guards. Sudden fear

swept Tommy. The Martians were staring straight at him.

Desperately, he signalled to his frozen muscles; *Let's get out of here.* But they failed to respond. The guards stared at him. He stared back.

Nothing happened.

Why, they're asleep, Tommy thought in amazement. They're standing there sound asleep with their eyes wide open holding their spears. That's crazy. Why don't they fall down?

Tommy wanted to run. But he couldn't. The curiosity of the very young not only barred retreat, but pushed him slowly forward until he was standing beside one of the guards.

The Martian had not moved a muscle. His chest neither rose nor fell. Completely fascinated, Tommy extended his hand. He touched the face of the guard. It was rough and cool. The guard did not move. Tommy laid a hand against the golden harness. Nothing happened. He had not intended to push, but he did. He pushed so hard the guard tilted over on one stiff leg. Appalled, Tommy leaped back.

The guard kept on tilting until he fell on his side with a great crash of ringing metal.

TOMMY darted back through the color rays and out of the

strange room so fast that he was far down the marble hall before his mind told him he was running.

He kept on running. Then he stopped as suddenly as he had started. He looked down at his wounded arm. He glanced quickly up and down the corridor, then ducked again in a wall niche where he gave his whole attention to his arm.

Had he dreamed all this? The horrible Martian in the tunnel? The car crash? The color room? He must have dreamed it. The proof was there before him. A smooth, unblemished forearm where there had been a huge bloody bruise but a few moments before! He rubbed the arm—tested it. There was not the faintest sign of a wound.

He looked around in bewilderment, peeked both ways and moved out again into the corridor.

His luck had held for a long time but now it failed him as sudden footsteps sounded in a traversing passage just ahead. They were coming swiftly. Tommy looked around in desperation.

This appeared to be the end but it was not. Fate seemed indeed to be toying with him—moving him around like a mobile chessman. At the last moment it showed him a doorway he had overlooked. The door was unlocked and he went through it as fast as he could while

still closing it softly behind him.

Inside, the light was very dim. Tommy listened at the door as the sound of footsteps diminished. He smiled—quite proud of his ability to take care of himself under these circumstances. He would certainly have a lot to put in his diary when he got home.

If he got home.

Tommy drove this last thought from his mind. He would make it. He was doing all right. Whereupon fate slapped him and sharply for his conceit by turning him and dropping him down a flight of stairs he'd been too busy watching the door to notice.

The fall hurt but Tommy was no longer frightened. He knew that so long as he had survived the car crash no violence of this type could even dent him.

He got to his feet and danced around for a while, holding a barked shin, then straightened as a new sound smote his ears. Someone was sobbing.

A woman. A woman crying.

It did not take Tommy long to trace the sound. He was in a narrower, lower corridor now; one not as fine as the big one upstairs. As Tommy moved forward, the sobbing told him he was going in the right direction. He opened a door.

Inside the small room was a narrow, high-legged bed—more of a

table, Tommy thought, but he gave it no attention. He was held spell-bound by what lay upon the table.

A girl with wrists and ankles bound down. She had long chestnut hair that hung down over the edge of the table. She was helpless. And she was completely nude . . .

REX got up from the floor to which he had been viciously hurled by three Martian guards. He and Jean were in a cell. As the barred door clanged shut, he turned to help Jean as best he could. "Are you hurt?"

"I—I guess not." She tried to smile. Only my dignity."

"I got us into a pretty bad mess."

"It wasn't your fault."

"I don't know who's else it was."

Jean strained at her bonds, "They could have at least taken these things off our wrists."

"We can do it ourselves."

"That guard out there—he's leering in. Maybe we'd better wait until he leaves."

"Maybe he won't leave. Anyhow—I don't think they care whether we take them off or not."

They stood back to back while Rex worked on the thongs binding Jean. The knots were stubborn but they finally gave, the guard outside watching the process with amusement.

Jean got Rex's wrist free quickly and they sat down on the edge of the single bunk and rubbed their wrists. "Well," Jean said, "where do we go from here?"

"To wherever they execute their prisoners, I imagine."

"But we're still alive. Aren't we supposed to keep the chin up like they do in books?"

He took her suddenly in his arms. "You're a brave girl."

She pressed close to him. "I'd rather hear you say I'm an attractive girl."

He kissed her hard. "Does that convince you?"

She sighed and snuggled closer, oblivious of the leering guard. "Thanks, mister. That's better. A gal doesn't mind dying, but she hates to go out feeling she hasn't hooked her man."

Rex felt a catch in his throat at the brave front she was maintaining. And it had to be an effort. Jean was no fool. She was a realist. No need to tell her they were finished—that he was no superman who could kick down a wall and carry her to safety.

"Let's not think about anything but us," she whispered. "We have at least a few minutes to live—really live!"

"With that guard standing there?" Rex said bitterly.

"Well, then we can almost live."

She kissed him.

A few minutes later, he said, "Did you notice anything funny out there in that council room?"

"What do you mean by funny? I was so busy looking at those tumbling ice cliffs—"

"I mean the councilmen sitting on either side of Pandek. Not one of them moved or spoke."

"That's right. They sat there like dummies."

"A row of dummies afraid to move even their eyes."

"There's something else that puzzles me," Jean said. "Those ice cliffs are life and death to we Terrans down below. Then why do the Martians build them up each winter and melt them for us in the spring? I'd think they'd leave the plains arid and thus drive us out."

"I wondered about that too. There can be only one explanation. They've repeated the process for so long they're afraid to stop—afraid of what it might do to the overall welfare of the planet."

"Perhaps if they didn't the ice would pile up of its own accord and crush them and their cities."

"I wonder how many cities there are."

"I don't care—really. Hold me closer. I'm cold . . ."

"BUT I don't understand why they would do such a thing

as this," Tommy said. He had released the girl and found her clothing in a corner of the room.

"It is a part of some pagan rite they plan to revive. The victim must lie in—in the manner you found me for a certain length of time. Some weird looking priests visited me at intervals and recited incantations. It was horrible!"

"What's your name?"

"I'm Helen Spencer. I came here with my father—"

"Never mind that now. I think we can get out of here. There was nobody in the hallway when I came in."

"I'd like to find my father,"

"We can try."

"They separated us a long time ago. For a while they treated me like a queen, even though they kept me a prisoner. I wondered why. Now I know. It was all a part of this terrible pagan sacrifice. I think the time is very near."

"Then let's go."

But they had waited too long. The door opened and four Martian guards entered. They almost filled the room. Tommy hurled himself at the closest one but was knocked viciously back against the wall. It seemed that fate had deserted him at last.

The Martian in charge, one who stood a head taller than the other three, grasped Helen roughly by

the arm. He seemed infuriated at finding her dressed. He threw her roughly after Tommy and she too fell to the floor.

The Martian stood there, undecided, some problem evidently occupying his mind. The three subordinates waited in silence. After a few moments, the leader turned and barked several sharp commands.

The orders puzzled the three Martians. They stood where they were until the leader barked another sharper order. Then they turned and filed out.

The leader stood motionless until their footsteps died in the corridor. Then he bent swiftly and lifted Helen Spencer to her feet.

As she cringed away, he said, "I am Maxis, a dictator in the Emperor's guard. I think perhaps you can help me. If so, I may be able to help you."

"You—you're speaking Terran," Helen said.

"Of course. Many of us know your language." He pointed to Tommy. "Who is this one?"

"I don't know. But I'm sure he has hurt none of you. Please let him go free."

Maxis shook his head impatiently. "It is of no importance. Tell me—while you lay here bound, did they bring a man to see you? A very old man—very feeble?"

Helen did not trust the Martian.

After what had happened to her she was in no mood to trust any of these people. There had been an old man. The priests and a tall young Martian had practically carried him in. They had stayed in the room for quite a while, the young Martian talking harshly. The older one had pleaded with him. Had the old man escaped? Helen wondered. Was this one hunting him down?

"You don't trust me," Maxis said. "but you must. If the old one came he would have been brought by a young one. The old one would have been horrified at seeing you."

"That's how it was," Helen said.

Maxis' eyes flared. He laid a quick hand on Helen's shoulder, then drew it back. "How long ago was this? Tell me! How long ago?"

"Several hours at least."

"Then he still lives! They lied to us. Pandek lied to us!"

"If you would explain—"

"The man you saw—the old one—was Fanton, Lord of the North Hemisphere — Ruler of Mars. Pandek told us of his death when he assumed the throne. Only for this reason did the legions swear loyalty to Pandek. But Fanton still lives!"

Tommy had got to his feet and was brushing his clothes. "Maybe not. They might have killed him in the meantime."

"I have a feeling he is not dead,"

Maxis insisted. "I must find him. I must not fail to find him!"

He was turning toward the door. Tommy said, "What about us?"

Maxis turned back and Tommy knew he was ready to leave them to fend for themselves. Tommy said, "You promised to help us if she told you what you wanted to know."

"You are right. But you will be in my way."

"A promise is a promise," Tommy said stoutly.

"Very well. We will go down to the prison block. You two will march ahead. I will act as though I am delivering you. But if there is any trouble I will have to desert you. I cannot stand and fight. I cannot risk being slain until I find my Emperor."

They marched out into the corridor. The three guards had gone their way and no one was in sight. But from the grim look on the Martian's face, Tommy knew peril lay ahead.

THE door to the cell in which Rex and Jean were imprisoned was unlocked. Five Martian guards entered. The leader was in high rage. "This girl will have to do," he snapped. "The crowds in the square will not know the difference and the priests will just have to keep

their mouths shut. Take her!"

As three of the guards advanced on Jean, Rex went into action. He drove his knee into the groin of the leader, bending the Martian forward into a straight right that almost tore his head off. The Martian went down. His jaw structure was so thick, Rex's fist turned numb from the contact and the Martian was only dazed.

Rex knew his one hope lay in getting control of the small pistol the leader carried. He lunged. The gun lay in the fallen leader's outstretched hand. Rex's fingers touched it. But the leader's fist closed.

The delay was fatal. It gave one of the guards time to take one long step and kick Rex solidly behind the right ear. Rex went down hard, smacking the floor with his face. He did not move. Jean screamed. A hard hand went brutally over her mouth, dragging her down also.

The leader of the squad said, "Take her to the ceremonial room. Prepare her for the knife. Tell the priests I will be there soon."

"Aye, great Lord Pandek," the guard said.

Jean bit the hand that lay across her mouth. It was jerked away. She tore loose and threw herself down on Rex's unconscious body. She was pulled roughly to her feet and other hard hands dragged her away.

PERHAPS it was Tommy's luck that carried the party through. On the trip to the cell blocks they met only two other Martians—not soldiers—who exhibited only mild curiosity.

Once in the lower tier, Maxis seemed more at home. "This is the likeliest cell block," he said.

"But we can't search all those cells," Tommy said. "It would take hours. We'd surely be stopped." He was looking down a long corridor lined with bars. Other corridors intersected until the place was a maze.

"You are right," Maxis said. "I have a plan that may save us time. Come. You two walk behind me now."

They moved down the corridor. Only one guard lay in their path but he was down on his haunches, asleep. They glided past him, Maxis' gun held ready. They moved on until they were approaching a more brightly lighted intersection. A small table was located against the bars of a corner cell and a Martian sat at the table occupied with some papers.

The trio approached from behind the man quietly. He heard them when they were a few steps away. He turned. Maxis took a last bold step and was towering over the seated one.

Maxis spoke casually, but with

authority. "I've been sent to deliver Fanton to the council hall."

Maxis did not expect cooperation from the guard. But he hoped for something else. His eyes were on the guard's face, watching for the man's first reaction.

It was entirely satisfactory from Maxis' point of view. The guard's startled eyes widened, then narrowed in suspicion. "Who sent you for him?"

Maxis smiled without humor. "Then he is here! He does live! What cell, you mother's mistake? Quick!"

The guard looked into the barrel of the deadly gun Maxis held close to his face. A black hole from whence could come needle flames that would burn his head into an instantaneous crisp. "The—third aisle—cell eight—"

The gun in Maxis's hand spit a small blue flame. For a moment, the guard's head was enveloped in fire. Then the head was gone.

Helen Spencer recoiled in horror. Maxis said, "He was a traitor." To the Martian, that justified everything. He bent over and picked up the headless body and carried it into the nearest cell.

He returned and said to Tommy, "This is the dangerous moment. You must help me—do exactly as I say. You must go to the cell and bring Fanton back to this table.

I must wait here."

Tommy was perplexed. "I don't get it. You should be better able to get him out of his cell. If we meet a guard, he'll stop us."

"No he won't. He will bring you here. All authority in the block stems from this key-center. If you meet a guard tell him you are under orders from the key-keeper. He will be suspicious and completely confounded, but he will bring you here. In the meantime I can better stave off trouble with the authority this post gives me." Maxis looked at Helen and pointed. "You—into that cell—out of sight. Stay there until we have either succeeded or failed." His face was grim. "If we fail, you must shift for yourself with nothing but my good wishes to help you on your way."

His tone indicated his good wishes would be of scant aid. He laid a hand on Tommy's shoulder. "Walk to the next intersection down that corridor. Turn to your right and count off seven cells. Fanton will be in the eighth. Good luck."

TOMMY took the key Maxis handed him and started off as directed. The key seemed very heavy. The corridor seemed very long. The task set for him seemed next to impossible.

He reached the cell without trouble. He unlocked the door. In

side, a very old Martian lay in filth and rags on the floor. Tommy knelt beside him, his heart pounding. "You are to come with me," he said.

The old Martian opened his eyes. "Who are you?"

"I am Tommy Wilks, a Terran, but that doesn't matter. Maxis, one of your friends, is waiting at the table down the hall. Can you walk, sir?"

A tired smile brightened the old Martian's face. "Strange, indeed are our times—when a Terran juvenile comes to aid the Lord of the North Hemisphere. The times have gone mad and we can only go where destiny directs—or seems to."

Fanton, with Tommy's aid, had got to his feet and Tommy helped him from the cell. But now there was a barrier—three scowling Martian guards. One of them barked a challenge in his own language. "Don't say anything," Tommy warned Fanton. "Maxis said it might work out like this."

To the Martian, he said, "I've been sent to bring the prisoner," but he knew the Martian did not understand him.

The three spoke among themselves, their confusion quite obvious.

Then it worked exactly as Maxis had hoped. At a command from one, the other two guards took

Tommy and Fanton each by an arm and hauled them along the corridor toward the key-center. As they approached it, Tommy saw that Maxis had gotten to his feet and was waiting for them. The grim Martian stood with both hands behind his back.

As they came to a halt, the leader of the trio spoke questioningly to Maxis in their own language. Before Maxis could answer, the other's eyes opened wide and Tommy knew what was going on in his mind. He was recognizing Maxis as a false key-keeper.

The leader got short satisfaction from his discovery. He died with his questions still unanswered as Maxis brought his right arm around and blasted the man's head into a cinder.

The other two guards fell away quickly, their reflexes in perfect condition. Both snatched for their own guns, one going down as Maxis' ray cut him in two.

The other guard was bringing his gun up. Maxis had no time to match shots with him or perhaps chose not to from a certainty that both of them would die as a result.

Instead, he hurled himself on the guard and caught the latter's wrist bending the gun away from himself and the others. The guard was far heavier than Maxis, his bulk possessed of greater strength. He drop-

ped the gun but heaved Maxis to one side and came down heavily upon him. He had trapped Maxis' arms successfully and it was a matter of moments before he would again have the gun in his fist.

Tommy acted from desperation—without plan. A heavy ring of keys lay on the desk. Tommy snatched them up and swung them, from high over his head, down hard on the skull of the guard. The guard's head was indeed hard. The keys rang dully against it but the guard's hand only faltered in reaching for the gun.

Tommy swung the keys again and again. Unable to grip the gun, the guard reached with both hands, thus losing his hold on Maxis for a moment.

The moment was enough. Suddenly the guard stiffened and came awkwardly erect. There was an empty look in his eyes and then Tommy saw the reason. The handle of a dagger protruded from his chest, driven in by Maxis who was even now rolling the corpse over and coming free.

Maxis sheathed his dagger, still dripping blood. He snapped, "We've got to move fast. Now all we have to go on is hope."

Helen came from the cell as Tommy asked, "Where are we going?"

"We've got to get Fanton to the Place of Eternal Strength. Come!"

He took the old Martian in his arms and the cavalcade moved off down the corridor following Maxis' lead. Guards could be heard, running in from different directions.

To Maxis, it was but a matter of time. He did not expect to reach the Place of Eternal Strength. He could only try; and die finally, battling for his Emperor. But this did not sadden him. There was no better way for a Martian to die. . .

REX floated in a sea of pain. Sadistically beaten by the guards who had overpowered him, he lay on the floor of the cell; aware of the blood-pool around him and of the pain, but unable to force his body into action. He knew the door to the cell stood open. He forced his mind to focus on this point. It could mean only one thing.

The guards had left him for dead.

The thought cheered him. He was not dead. Therefore he was living on borrowed time—a break men in his profession seldom got.

Another thought intruded. Maybe he wasn't lucky. Maybe he was crippled. He had as yet not inventoried the damage. Was it worse than the pain indicated?

He searched for numbness and found none. He moved and the pain increased. That was good. Nothing paralyzed. But was an arm

or leg broken? Was there a spine injury?

Resolutely, he forced his muscles to respond. Arms, legs, bones okay. He got to his feet and swayed dizzily. Pain shot through his head. He almost blacked out, clawed at the wall, kept himself from falling.

He got hold of a bar and held himself erect while the floor spun and the walls tilted. Then they steadied away. His stomach settled back into place, the nausea giving ground sullenly.

After a while, he decided he was all right. As all right as he would be for a long time. He looked around for a weapon. All the bars were in solid rock. The legs of the bunk were riveted down.

He hunted and stood finally looking at his two fists. They were all he had. They would have to do.

He stepped out of his cell and saw two guards approaching along the corridor. He debated flight. He stopped. There were the two fists. Might as well find out right now how effective they would be. He crouched and stood waiting . . .

JEAN moved in a daze. She had been taken by the Martian guard through long corridors, into a splendid part of whatever building this was. At one point during the trip, she lashed out suddenly, bit the hand across her mouth and

raked her nails across a hard face.

The Martians had been in no mood to tame a tigress the gentle way. The big Martian, after snarling from the bite, swung his other fist viciously. The blow rang against Jean's head. She fell. The Martians growled at each other, picked her up roughly and carried her, half-conscious, on down the corridor.

She was taken to a high room, far up in the building. The room seemed to be some sort of a storage place for fine garments. They were everywhere; gold surplices hanging in rows; gold and silver sandals hanging from pegs along the wall. A rich room with windows and daylight coming in; the first Jean had seen in a long time.

She remembered the stone hutch—so wondrous—so far away—so unattainable. Rex. Tears welled in Jean's eyes and she tasted the dregs of bitterness as she saw Rex—in memory—lying bloody and broken on the floor of the cell; recalled the ferocity with which the Martians had attacked him.

Suddenly Jean realized what was going on—what the Martians were doing there in the high room—stripping off her clothing. With a choked cry she found new strength and fought again.

She took them by surprise; broke from them and ran, half naked, toward the door. Escape seemed im-

minent but she threw herself straight into the arms of a tall, scowling Martian who held her like a child and carried her back into the terrible room. As he walked toward them, those who had brought her there fell on their knees. One of them intoned, "Pandek—great Pandek—Lord of the North Hemisphere."

"Not quite," Pandek said, speaking in Terran. "And never if I continue to be surrounded by bungling fools such as you, who cannot hold a slip of a girl. Had I not come through that door she would even now be making her escape."

"She surprised us, great Pandek. It will not happen again."

Callously, Pandek held Jean forth with one great hand and hit her sharply on the point of her chin with a doubled fist. "I'll make certain of that. Here—take her. Maybe you will be safer with an unconscious sacrifice. Comb out her hair—wash her body. Put on the golden harness—get her ready for the knife."

They took Jean from him and laid her on a marble slab and continued their ministrations. Pandek, scowling deeply, walked to the window and looked out. Beyond and below, was a great open square filled with people. They milled about a high, central platform up-

on which sat a throne and a sacrificial block. The block was caked with the blood of a thousand sacrifices made before the Reformation, centuries before. It had been removed from the square, but had been carefully preserved by a core of fanatics who had never given up hope of the Old Regime coming again into power; the old, bloody regime that worshiped the robust pagan gods and gave the people great spectacles.

Now the block had been returned; the minds of the people had been inflamed and they awaited the first sacrifice of the New Age—the age in which proud pagan Mars would again demand its rightful place in the sun. Pandek's hand thrilled for the feel of the knife. He thrilled at the thought of driving it home and thus ushering in the New Age.

His mind went, quite naturally, to Fanton, the weak old fool he had dragged down. It had been a clever coup. Of course, Fanton still had followers, but they had been misled, lied to, cleverly hoodwinked. A little fearful of a slip in his plans, Pandek had not had Fanton slain. He had merely thrown the old fool into a cell to die—had deprived him of rejuvenation.

Perhaps Fanton was already dead. Pandek wondered. But perhaps not, and with plans having

gone forward so smoothly, it was safe to kill the deposed Lord of the Northern Hemisphere.

Pandek turned swiftly and went to see about it . . .

MAXIS, leading his cavalcade down the prison corridor and carrying the even frailer body of his Emperor, traveled half the breadth of the prison before danger confronted him; three guards loyal to Pandek the usurper and dedicated to his treacherous cause.

Maxis laid the body of Fanton gently upon the floor. Then he stepped over it and made his stand between his Emperor and those who had deserted him. He paid no attention to the two Terrans. He wished them neither harm nor good fortune, they would be of no value in this fight so he forgot them.

The guards, sure of their advantage, moved slowly forward. They knew Maxis and gave him a tribute by taking it for granted he would not retreat. They drew their short, wicked swords, thus forcing Maxis, a man of ethics, to fore-swear use of any other weapon even though death faced him.

The Martians moved in from three angles, skillful swordsmen all, and Maxis parried three quick thrusts with a tricky maneuver that left a scratch on the arm of one guard.

It was a gallant parry, worthy of a better reward than certain death. The guards retreated a step, set themselves, and moved in again. Maxis would certainly not be able to repeat the maneuver.

Then there was new, sudden, and devastating action. From the rear of the guards, came a crazed, unarmed juggernaut of destruction; a mad Terran; Bloody, savage-eyed, lethal, he threw himself against the flank of the advancing trio, locked an arm around his throat, and with leverage obtained by wrapping his legs around the Martian's body, snapped the ugly head at the base of the spine.

The Martian fell with the Terran under him. As Tommy cried, "Rex—Rex! Where did you come from?" the Terran had disentangled himself from the corpse and was engaging a second guard. Stunned by the suddenness of the attacks, the guard was easy prey for the Terran's death grip. A second spine snapped and as the Terran rose, he saw that the third guard had fallen before Maxis' sword.

Maxis said. "Your aid was indeed timely."

Rex wiped blood from his face and advanced like a great cat. "What are you doing with these people?"

Tommy rushed forward. "It's all right, Rex. This is our friend.

The old man is the Lord of the North Hemisphere. Maxis is trying to save his life. This is Helen Spencer. They were going to kill her."

Maxis had again taken Fanton in his arms: "We have no time to discuss these things. Find a gun on one of those bodies and follow."

He moved swiftly down the corridor. Tommy and Helen Spencer followed, but Rex strode forward until he was abreast of the Martian. "Where are we going?" There was suspicion and hostility in his voice—as though he suspected a trick.

"I can't go into detail," Maxis said, "but believe me, our chances of survival lie in reaching a ray fountain we call the Place of Eternal Strength. The Emperor's life is at stake and ours also."

As though on cue, two guards appeared from a cross-corridor. Grinning mirthlessly, Rex turned the gun on them. It spat forth a crackling ray that cut them in the middle and brought the upper halves of their bodies toppling to the floor.

"Now lead the way," Rex said.

He killed four more guards before they arrived at the Place of Eternal Strength, shooting them in the back without compunction as he stalked ahead of Rex, clearing the way.

Upon arrival at their destination, Tommy cried, "Why this is the

place where my arm was healed. I had a wound and then it was gone!"

MAXIS laid the body of Fanton on a marble couch under the singing colored rays. "Even greater miracles are achieved here," he said. "It heals all ills—even old age. If a spark of life remains in a body, the fountain greatens and strengthens it."

Rex stared in wonder. "Will it revive the dead?"

"No. It will preserve a dead body—cause it to remain perfect for centuries but once life is gone it can never be returned."

"Then this is what happened to Professor Spencer. He was killed and placed under this ray."

Maxis nodded sadly. "Brutally murdered. It was Pandek's signal for his great coup. We were caught completely unawares. He acted very cleverly and told us Fanton had died, refusing rejuvenation, when in truth he had deprived Fanton of the fountain's healing power. Only today did I discover that Fanton still lived."

Rex was staring at the body of the ancient ruler. "How long does the process take?"

"A matter of minutes. Let's only hope that those minutes are afforded us."

"There are still some shots in my gun," Rex said.

They waited, while the body of Fanton seemed to visibly recharge itself. Two guards appeared. Rex killed them.

"How was this rebellion allowed to get started?" he asked.

There was a grim look upon Maxis' face. "Through laxness. Through carelessness. From stopping our ears against the sound of treacherous undercurrents. From feeling that young hotheads were basically sound and would not arrange their own destruction and ours too."

"This Pandek you speak of—he planned to move against the Terrans to the south?"

"He still plans it. He has vowed to wipe every alien from the planet and establish a new age of Martian resurgence."

"The Martians would be annihilated."

"Pandek is willing to gamble on that."

"He must be insane," Rex said.

"It began when Fanton advocated a change in Martian policy. For centuries, ever since the Terrans came, our course has been one of proud isolation. The policy was instituted centuries ago by ill-advised leaders and Fanton carried it on against his better judgment. When he began talking of a reversal, the underground mutiny gained in strength."

"Will saving Fanton's life stop the rebellion?"

"This thing we do is only a feeble step in the right direction. Even with Fanton strong and healthy, we may not be able to win."

"What is this sacrifice business?"

"It is supposed to take place in the public square. An old and barbaric rite in which a maiden is slain and the people file by and bathe their hands in her blood. It will be the signal for the final act of overthrow—when the rebels come into the open and slay all who remain faithful to Fanton."

A new voice spoke. The two men turned. Fanton was sitting on the edge of the marble couch. Helen and Tommy were staring at him.

Fanton's words were for Maxis. "You have done well. If I'd known before where loyalty lay, things might have been different."

Maxis dropped to one knee. He bowed his head. "My lord."

"No time for this. I must get to the Council."

"It will be very dangerous."

"But the uprising must be beaten down. The Council is still loyal. They must see that I am alive."

Rex said, "I think you'll find—"

Fanton waved him to silence. "We must hurry."

"Perhaps they will have to be assembled. If they are not in session"—

"They *must* be in session!"

On the trip to the Amphitheater of the Gods, two rebels were killed and one loyal Martian added to the cavalcade. As they moved into the great hall, Fanton said, "They are here!"

This appeared to be true. The seats flanking the central throne were still occupied. The throne itself was vacant. Immediately upon entering the great hall, Rex ran forward and climbed to the tier of benches. The council members sat silent, unmoving. Rex pushed the body of the nearest one. It tumbled off the bench like a sack of grain and fell to the floor.

Fanton paled. "What does this mean?"

"They're all dead," Rex replied. "When we were here before I noticed that none of them moved nor spoke. This is the work of a madman—Pandek. This is his joke. He rules all alone."

Maxis said, "You will have to try and escape, my Lord. You must get to the Terrans and tell your story."

Fanton considered. "If I run like a coward, thousands of loyal Martians will die. Their blood will be on my hands."

"That's not true," Rex said,

AS the group left the Place of Eternal Strength, Maxis said,

sharply.

Further talk was interrupted by the sound of men approaching at a run. Fanton turned and pointed. "Behind that pillar! There is a small door that leads to an observatory platform above the square. Only my father knew of the stairway behind the wall."

Fanton pressed a carved leaf in a decoration on the pillar and a small section of the seemingly unbroken wall moved inward. Fanton entered and the rest followed with Rex and Maxis and the new recruit bringing up the rear.

Maxis said, "I will stay here and fight. I'm tired of running away."

Rex dragged him into the opening. "Don't be a fool. There's a time to fight and a time to run. This is a time to run."

As the wall-section slid back into place, Fanton indicated a stairway a short distance down the narrow corridor. Rex said to Maxis. "You go ahead to guard Fanton. This new man and I will stay here in case Fanton and his father weren't the only ones who knew about that opening. I think whoever was coming heard us leave."

Maxis was prepared to object. He hesitated, watching Fanton, Tommy and Helen move up the circular stairway. "Go ahead," Rex snapped. "You don't know who may be up there."

Scowling, Maxis turned suddenly and took the stairs three at a time.

Rex and the loyal Martian had a short wait. The sound of the others had scarcely died out above, when the panel opened again. "I was right," Rex whispered. "Stand on the other side."

The two defenders had the advantage of a comparatively dim interior; that, and the remaining charges in Rex's gun. Three guards crowded into the narrow passageway.

As they saw Rex standing by the stairway, he dropped to the floor and fired at an upward angle. His lethal charges cut the two forward guards to pieces.

The third one, though confused, was more alert. He also had a gun and looked desperately around for a target. The loyal Martian thrust viciously with his sword. He missed. The guard danced away. Rex brought his gun around, but hesitated with the loyal Martian in his range of fire. When he maneuvered a clear shot, he pressed the switch. Nothing happened. The gun was empty.

In the meantime, the guard brought his gun around to bear on the Martian. The latter made a second desperate thrust. It went home but only as the Martian fell dead from the guard's last shot. Rex got to his feet, wiping sweat from his

face.

And at that moment, Pandek stepped into the passageway.

Instantly, Rex leaped for the fallen guard's gun. Pandek smiled contemptuously and kicked it far down the passageway. Pandek apprised the situation swiftly. He said, "Pick up the sword, Terran scum."

Without reply, Rex bent down and did as directed.

"Are you skilled in its use?" Pandek asked.

"I never had one in my hand before."

Pandek raised his own sword, identical to the one Rex held. "Then I'm afraid the contest will be rather unequal," he said and moved toward Rex "On guard! It will be a great pleasure to kill you."

Rex took a backward step. He was no match for Pandek with these weapons. Pandek would be a master at close swordsmanship. This had to be true. Otherwise Pandek would not be so eager to engage him.

Rex thought of the headquarters on Earth; of Professor Spencer, so still, so peaceful in that box. So dead. Would he go back to Terra the same way?

With Fanton's hiding place known to Pandek, the rebellion seemed assured of success—as certain as his own death at Pandek's

hands.

He took another backward step . . .

JEAN was ready for the sacrifice. She had been dressed in a rich golden harness and wore golden manacles on her wrists. She had waited in the room with the sound of the crowds in the great court below rising in volume as their impatience increased.

Finally a door opened. A tall resplendent figure entered. He wore a jeweled cloak that swept the floor. A hideous golden mask covered his face.

There were two attending priests with Jean. They dropped to their knees and lowered their eyes. One of them intoned, "Great Pandek. Lord of the Northern Hemisphere. The sacrifice is ready for your knife."

The room grew hazy before Jean's eyes. It spun in a sickening swirl as she slipped to the floor in a dead faint . . .

When she regained consciousness, Jean found herself under an archway in the court below. The great square was jammed with howling Martians. A long red carpet stretched from the archway to the platform in the center of the square. The sting of a sharp odor in her nostrils told Jean how she had been revived.

A priest on either side now supported her. They moved forward from the building toward the platform. Evidently, she could either walk or be dragged. She preferred to walk. She raised her head high and matched the priests' step for step.

The crowd pressed close to the red carpet on either side. Unbroken lines of guards held the Martians back. To Jean, they seemed things out of a nightmare.

They reached the steps leading up to the platform. Five steps. She counted them as she ascended.

The marble block.

The priests laid her along its length. The golden manacles were removed. Each priest took an arm and held her to the slab with the tall masked figure raising his knife and looking down at her. The knife arched.

Then, halfway in its descent toward her bared breast, it stopped. The masked figure looked upward toward the high wall of the building. He shrank backward — pointed with the knife as he cringed away.

A dramatic gesture that turned every eye in the square toward a small balcony high on the wall. A cry went up. A single word.

"Fanton!"

The true Lord of the Northern Hemisphere stood with his arms outstretched imperiously over the

crowd below. He held this position until the roaring died away and a whisper could have been heard in the great square. Then he spoke.

"Hear your Emperor now! You have been lied to by those who would destroy you. You have been told I was dead and that a new order would prevail among you; an old, outdated order that brought only blood and suffering in its time. I tell you now that those who spoke thus were traitors who sought to exploit your suffering to their cruel ends. The leader of these was Pandek, a prince I trusted. I now declare his life forfeit and say to you that he will be executed in public at this hour one day hence. Return now to your homes and have done with this madness. I, your Emperor command each of you personally. You who are vested with authority, return to your duties."

The sonorous voice ceased and Jean felt herself being raised from the marble slab. She opened her eyes. The golden mask had been lifted from the face of the executioner. He had dropped the knife and now he held a sword in his hand.

It was Maxis.

He whispered, "Under the platform, quick! There is an underground passage back into the palace. You will be safe."

Jean was bewildered. As she descended she saw that the crowd had surged backward, leaving an open space between the platform and the palace. Maxis turned and ran toward the open space.

A small group of Martians was running forward from the building. They were led by Pandek with a sword in his hand. From another doorway, Rex ran to join Maxis. He was unarmed.

One of Pandek's group turned and swerved out to intercept him. Like a great cat, Rex crouched, waiting. The Martian moved in. Rex went under the vicious swipe of the Martian's sword and caught the Martian's arm and spun him around. Before the Martian could recover his balance, there was an arm around his throat—pressure on his spine. He screamed as his spine snapped. Rex raced on and joined Maxis.

THE guards in the square had now chosen sides. A few rallied behind Pandek. By far the majority took their stand behind Maxis. Their number doomed the smaller group.

But Maxis held up his hands. "Stand back! All of you! Come forward, Pandek." You think so highly of your swordsman's skill. Let me see the proof. Just we two."

Pandek was not slow in accept-

ing the challenge. He came forward and the two Martians circled cautiously in the open space between the two opposing forces.

Pandek seemed the better of the two. Maxis fought mainly on the defensive, his play unspectacular, which made Pandek's thrusts seem all the more brilliant.

Pandek evidently felt any retreat was a mark against him. Not so with Maxis. He retreated whenever it was made necessary by Pandek's able thrusts. Pandek sneered. Maxis fought stolidly, doggedly.

Until Pandek made the mistake of losing regard for his foe's ability. He thrust smartly and did not maintain the balance necessary for retreat in case of quick counter attack.

The counterattack came. Suddenly Maxis' blade was everywhere. Pandek retreated in order to regain his balance and reassume domination of the match.

Maxis never gave him a chance to do this. Always, Pandek was a scant second too late in parrying a thrust to balance himself for the next. He fell.

Maxis moved in swiftly. For a moment he stayed his thrust hoping. And what he hoped for, came to pass. Pandek's courage broke. With terror in his eyes, the fallen Martian shouted, "Stop! I am of royal blood. You don't dare kill

me!"

Maxis smiled and drove his blade home.

As he drew it forth, he glanced at Pandek's waiting group. Brave men all, who had espoused the losing cause openly. To a man they were throwing down their swords, their eyes on the dead Pandek, contempt on their faces. The contempt of men who suddenly realized they had been led by a coward. Men who were ashamed.

Maxis sheathed his blade and looked up to where Fanton, Lord of the Northern Hemisphere raised his hand in salute.

Maxis bowed. Then he turned to Rex. He said, "It is over, my friend. The fuse has been snuffed in time. We will be eternally in your gratitude."

"It's the other way around. We're getting out of this little affair with whole skins. That's something to be really thankful for."

* * *

(From the diary of Tommy Wilks)

What a story I'll have to tell! I guess I'm about the luckiest kid on Mars right now because when we get back, they're going to let me tell what happened! I've got it all written down so I won't forget anything. I've got it up to the time we left Rex and the Martian in the passageway behind the wall. Rex didn't tell me all that hap-

pened but when Maxis got back there, after hearing the noise, he found Pandek on the floor unconscious. Rex said Pandek came at him with a sword and he was pretty sure Pandek would kill him but Pandek missed a thrust and Rex got in a lucky grab and pushed a nerve on Pandek's neck. He made it sound very easy but I'll bet Rex is about the best nerve fighter in the world. That's what they call men who can kill with nothing but their bare hands.

Anyhow, they brought Pandek upstairs and Maxis wanted to kill him. But Fanton said no—that Pandek should be kept alive until the rebellion was over—if it ever was.

They talked about what they'd do, but Fanton made the final decision because he was the Emperor. He said he wanted to reveal himself to the people at a dramatic moment because that was what had an affect on crowds. He decided the most dramatic moment would be while The knife was raised over Jean.

So they took Pandek to a room and tied him up and Maxis took his place. Maxis' job was to call the crowd's attention to Fanton at the right instant to heighten the dramatic effect. He was also suppose to look scared to death so the crowd wouldn't swing Pandek's side against

the Emperor.

It all worked swell except for one thing. Some traitor guards came and let Pandek out. If Pandek had gone after Fanton, it all might have ended differently. That's what Rex said. But Pandek got rattled and went after Maxis instead. Maxis killed him even though Pandek was a much better swordsman.

Now to me, that doesn't make any sense I asked Rex about that but he just smiled and said Pandek was better than Maxis except for one thing. Guts. That's a funny term that means courage. I wonder where

Rex heard it. Probably on Earth.

Anyhow, everything is fine, now. The people are behind Fanton and he's coming back to New Iowa with us and wants to go on to Terra for a good-will visit. He wants to open the northern country to Terrans and trade scientific secrets.

Right now I'm in a room they gave me to sleep in while we're here. I saw Jean and Rex walking in the garden down below. He was kissing her.

Or maybe it was the other way around.

THE END



"DARLING!"

Stop, You're Killing Me!

by

Darius John Granger

As a private eye I get a lot of screwball cases, but nothing to match my own; my wife and kid trying to kill me — and neither aware of it!

IT'S funny how a silly little habit can save your life.

I got into the car that morning and was thinking of nothing in particular — except maybe the cases I hoped to be getting downtown in my one man private dick office. We live at the top of the city's highest hill, my wife and our son Sam, who's seventeen, and myself. At least it's the highest hill in the residential district and the highest one I know of. So out of habit I patted the brakes to test them as the car began to roll down the slight incline of the driveway:

The brakes didn't hold.

Had I started down Jackson Hill, down the long half mile slope which levels off at the busy intersection of MacArthur and Houston Avenues, I'd have streaked through the intersection out of control. I don't know what the odds for sur-

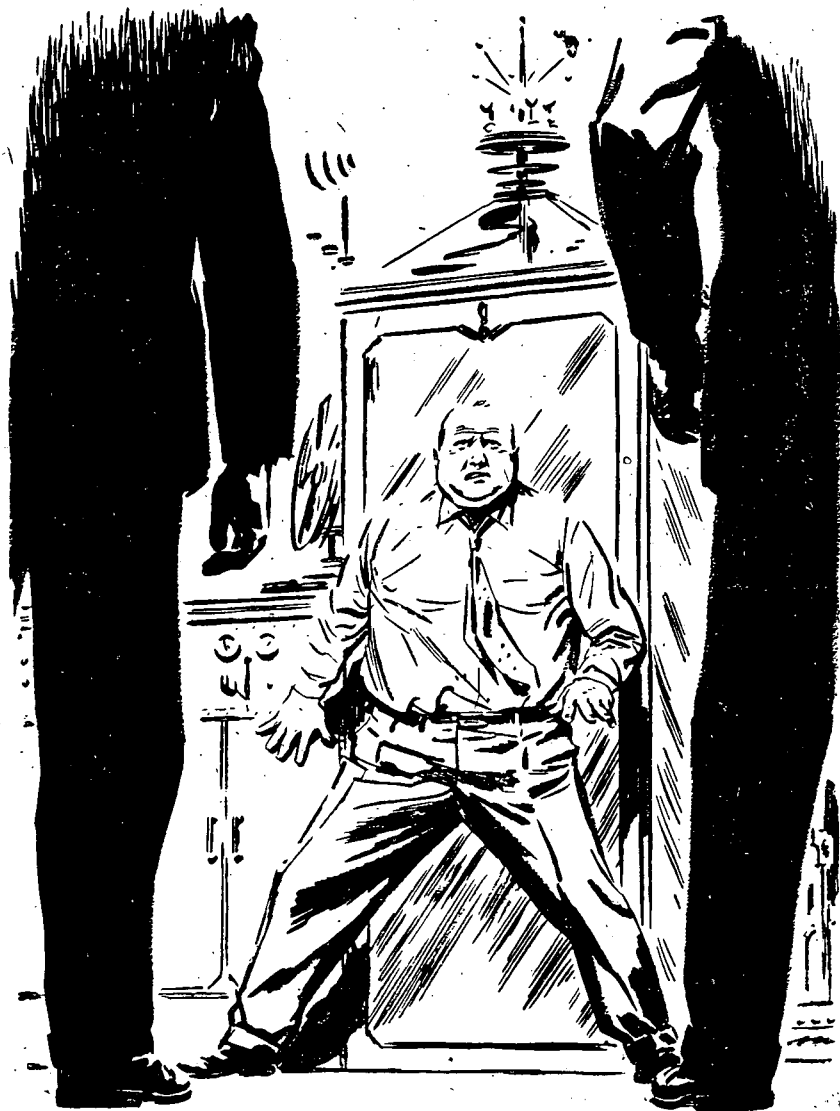
vival are in such a circumstance, but I'd hate to have to test them.

As it was, I shook my head in surprise and pulled the handbrake, bringing the Olds to a stop at the foot of the driveway. I climbed out and bent down to take a look at the right front wheel. In a few seconds I knew what the trouble was. Brake fluid. There wasn't any. But that didn't make sense because I'd had the car — brakes included — overhauled only last week.

Which meant someone had drained the brake fluid from the Olds.

I checked the other front wheel and it was the same. No brake fluid. I sat there in the car for a few minutes smoking a cigaret before I went into the house to call the local service station and have them tow the Olds in.

It was the third time in less than



a month that someone had tried to kill me.

That happens, of course, to private detectives. It isn't only in the movies and the two-bit mystery thrillers that it happens. It happens in real life, too. I know because I've been in the business twenty years. Go downtown some time and look me up; Frank Foley's the name and you'll find me in the Ditmas Building on Pearl Street. Sure it happens to private eyes in real life. They're on a hot case and someone wants them off and because it's known bribes won't do any good, violence, mayhem and murder are tried.

But that didn't fit the situation in this case. There had been three tries on my life. The jets of our gas stove turned on while I was napping over a cup of coffee late of a cold night in the kitchen, with door and windows closed. The pulley of our extension ladder failing to hold while I was up painting the eaves of the house. And now the drained brake fluid.

I was on no important case. All of my work at the moment was routine. They say I am getting old, but don't you believe it. I've got some good cases ahead of me yet. They say I was able to get away with my shady tricks when I was younger but that I'm slip-

ping and can't get away with them now. Don't you believe it. In my business you've always got to get away with them. And when Frank Foley is all washed up, Frank Foley will be the first one to know it.

The situation in this case was worse. The situation in this case was strictly a family affair. All the attempts at my life had been made at home, either by my wife Sue or our boy Sam. Sounds nuts, because we're a pretty happy family usually. But there it was. Either Sue or Sam could have snafu'd the pulley on the extension ladder and either one of them could have turned on the gas jets after I had dozed. As for the drained brake fluid, Sue didn't know a spark plug from the carburetor air intake, but Sam was a hot rod with his own beat-up jalopy and knew as much about cars as anyone since old Henry Ford himself.

I went inside and sat down at the kitchen table. Sam was still lingering over his coffee before heading over to the high school. Sue was doing the dishes and humming. She turned around and said:

"S'matter dear, something wrong with the car?"

"You better ask Sammy," I suggested.

"Sammy? But why?"

"I don't get it, pop," Sammy said still drinking his coffee.

The other two times I had said nothing. Accidents. You don't accuse your own wife and son of trying to kill you unless you're sure. But the drained brake fluid was no accident. I swept Sammy's coffee cup off the table with my right hand and grabbed the front of his shirt. Sue screamed with surprise as I dragged Sammy to his feet.

"You drained out the brake fluid," I said.

"I don't know what you're talking about, pop. What's the matter with you? You'll rip the shirt!"

"Lay off of him for crying out loud, Frank," Sue cried out.

"Lay off of him," I said, repeating her words and imitating her tone. This always exasperated Sue. She put down her dish rag and came over to me and hollered:

"Well, you haven't said what's the matter."

"I said he drained the brake fluid out of the car. I could have killed myself."

"That's ridiculous, Frank, and you know it. Why would Sam do a thing like that?"

"How should I know why he'd do a thing like that?"

"Why don't you let go of him?"

I did so and Sammy slumped down into his chair. "How should I know," I went on, "why either one of you would bolix up the extension ladder or turn on the gas jets right here in the kitchen while I was dozing?"

"What?" Sue gasped. "What did you say?"

"You heard right, mom," Sammy said, staring at me as if I'd just escaped from the twentieth century equivalent of bedlam.

"Frank, you've been working too hard," Sue said. "Why don't you take a vacation? We could go off to —"

"Oh, to hell with a vacation," I said, but I was simmering down. They both looked so completely innocent, it kind of stopped me. Add to that fact that my family had no reason in the world for trying to kill me, and I was almost inclined to believe them.

Except that you couldn't change the facts. You couldn't change what had happened.

I turned around without saying anything and headed for the door. "Why don't you drop in on Doc Mundin on the way to work?" Sue suggested.

I slammed the door and went out to the wife's car and got in and drove downtown. All the way down, you could have threaded a needle with the line my lips made.

THERE was one customer in my waiting room when I reached the office. I offered him a curt nod and went by the inner door. "Be right with you." I mumbled. He didn't respond. He was a short, chunky man with hips as wide as his shoulders and a flabby, loose-jowled face but a chest like a barrel. I gave him a double take when he failed to respond. I said, "Well, do you want to see a private detective or don't you?"

"I want to see you," he said.

Somehow, I didn't like the way he said it, but let it ride. "Be right with you," I told him as I unlocked the inner door and moved through the sanctum sanctorum, such as it is. I smoked a cigarette halfway down before I pressed the buzzer to admit him.

He came in with the bouncy stride to which chunky fat men are prone. He looked straight at me and smiled as if he had known me for years. "I'm glad to see you're still alive, Mr. Foley," he said.

I stood up. "Would you say that again please?" I asked him.

"I'm glad to see you're still alive."

"Just what the hell is that supposed to mean?"

"Well, let me see. By this time your wife and son would have

tried three times to kill you. That being the—"

I was around the desk before he could finish. I grabbed him much harder than I had grabbed Sammy. Something—probably the lining of his jacket—ripped. "You'd better explain that," I suggested.

"There's hardly anything to explain. Your wife tried to kill you by almost cutting through the pulley rope of your extension ladder, but you got off with a strained ankle. She tried to kill again by leaving the gas jets on one night in the kitchen. But you awoke in time. Your son tried to kill you this morning by draining the brake fluid from your car. There now. Does that bring us up to date?"

I was so shocked I let go of him. I sat down and lit another cigarette with what remained of the first. I watched him brush himself off and settle himself in the client chair.

"I can't blame you for behaving like that," he said.

"What the devil have you been doing, living in our attic and spying on me?"

"Dear me, no. But you see, I know. I know all about you, Mr. Foley. I have to know."

"You have to?"

"Now that you have avoided

death the first three times, I'm going to hire you."

"To hire me? What for?"

I must have sounded so amazed that my visitor said: "You do hire yourself out as a private detective? Don't you? That is your function, isn't it?"

"Yeah, but —"

"But how did I know? That's a long story. Too long and too involved for you and probably you wouldn't believe it anyhow. Look, Mr. Foley: I would like to hire you. I am an inventor. Your job will be to protect me and my invention against harm — for as long as necessary. Perhaps the rest of my life."

"The rest of your life!"

"Oh, that isn't very long. You see, I die of a heart attack in 1959."

"I'm sorry to hear that," I said. "You mean, your doctor told you you only have three more years to live?"

"My doctor?" the chunky fat man said. "Dear me, no. My great great great grandchild told me. And he, of course, knows."

"Your great great great great grandchild," I said.

"Yes, of course. Naturally the dear boy — if you can call a man your own age a boy — is very upset. He's marooned here, you see."

"This — uh — great great great

great grandson is your own age, you say?"

"Perhaps a little older. I never asked him."

"But he won't be born for a hundred years!" I gasped. There was a silence. Then I smiled at my visitor. I had to smile. He was pulling my leg. He did it the best, the soberest way possible — but he was pulling my leg. There would be a place for him on TV, I thought, and said so.

"But I'm not joking," he insisted. "Everything I told you is true, Mr. Foley. Here is what I want you to do. For as long as necessary, perhaps until my death in 1959, I want you to protect me and my invention. I'll pay you a hundred dollars a week for as long as I live, plus expenses."

A hundred and expenses was more than I averaged, but I didn't say that. I said, "What do I have to protect you against?"

"Why, didn't I say? My great great —"

"Great great," I said for him, "grandson. Look, jack. You're talking in riddles. Why don't you spit straight out whatever you want to say? Your great great great great grandson can't possibly want to harm you because, damn it, he hasn't been born yet. Which leaves us where?"

"Oh, but you're wrong. He doesn't want to harm me specifically. He merely wants to stop me from completing my invention. When he discovered I was going to hire you to protect me he decided to kill you as a warning to me. He tried three times and missed three times so I know you're pretty resourceful, Mr. Foley. I'd feel that my invention and I are safe in your hands."

"First you say my family's trying to kill me, then you say your four times grandson. Well, which is it?"

"Both. That is, my relative employs mental suggestion on your relatives, using them as agents. They have no reason to kill you, do they?"

"No," I admitted.

"There. Then obviously it must be my — umm, four times grandson, as you say. Will you take the job?"

"I don't know yet," I said. "I'll admit it, jack. I don't know if you're crazy or I'm crazy."

"Why does either one of us have to be crazy? Can't you simply protect me and my invention and —"

"What kind of invention is it?" I asked.

"I thought you would get around to that."

"Well, what is it?"

"I had wanted to wait until it was finished so I could show you. One doesn't simply talk about an invention like mine and expect to be believed."

"When I'm puzzled I become arrogant. I guess you call it bluster and often it can see you through pretty rough spots. So despite the offer of a hundred dollars a week plus expenses I said, 'Either you tell me all about it, or we forget you ever came here. Understand?'"

"I suppose so," he admitted. "Very well, then —"

"Just a minute. You haven't even told me your name."

"It's Haney. Angus W. Haney, Mr. Foley."

"Now what about the invention?"

"It's almost finished," Angus W. Haney said. "At the moment I can't prove to you that it works. Unless you believe my great great grandson really is what I say he is."

"Whoever heard of a —"

"That is crucial, Mr. Foley. Because if you believe he is what I say he is, then you know my invention will be a success. You see, what I am in the process of inventing is a time machine."

THAT was enough for one day and I guess Angus W. Haney

knew it was enough. He gave me his card and told me to call him and I said that I would. After he had left, I got out the office bottle — which that winter was bourbon — and poured myself a good hard slug which went down smoothly. It's a hoax, I kept telling myself. It has to be a hoax.

But was it? I guess I wasn't entirely convinced, because Angus Haney had said that his four times grandson was using my Sue and Sammy — via mental suggestion — to kill me. And that being the case, I decided against going home that night. What the hell, a guy couldn't take chances, not in my business. You learned to be careful or else you left the business in a hurry or they carried you out. So, I'd wait and see.

I called up home and made some kind of excuse, then took a room downtown in the Hazel Arms Hotel. I checked in, showered, and went outside for a good meal. When I returned to the Hazel Arms it was early so I killed some time at the bar, then went out and took in a movie.

At ten o'clock that evening I went upstairs to turn in. Kind of an early hour for a private eye, I know, but I was bushed and I guess I'm not as young as I used to be. I shut the door behind me and was about to turn on the

light when a voice said:

"After you turn it on just walk to the bed and sit down, please. I'm holding a gun on you."

I touched the light switch and the room was bathed in light and I saw him. He was a middle aged fellow, but trim and well-preserved with dark piercing eyes and hair graying at the temples. He said, "I suppose you know who I am."

I sat down on the bed, shaking my head. He was seated across the room from me in a wing chair, holding a .38 Banker's Special very steadily in his right hand, the muzzle pointing at me.

"No," I said. "Who are you?"

"I am Angus Haney's great great great great grandson."

By then I didn't even blink. I merely said, "Go on, I'm listening."

"I tried to have you killed as a warning to my relation, Mr. Foley. You see, I don't want to kill him. I can't predict what might happen if I kill him. It's never been done before, killing an ancestor. I might disrupt the whole family line. For example, I might never be born. We couldn't possibly have that, could we?"

"Not if you say we couldn't. What do you want, jack? To kill me?"

"If I had wanted that I could merely pull the trigger, couldn't

I?"

"Yeah."

"I'm afraid trying to kill you was a mistake. Angus is determined to go on with his invention anyway. But if I can convince you not to take his proposition, perhaps I'll be able to destroy his time machine before he has time to hire another guard."

"But why do you want to destroy it?"

"Because I'm trapped here in your primitive age. Because I'll never get back to my own time, that's why."

"I don't get you."

"Look. My ancestor Angus Haney invents a time machine. It can travel toward in time, but not back. In my own day I invent a machine based to a large extent on Angus' earlier machine. It can travel back in time, but not forward. I come here, visiting your mid-twentieth century, thinking I can return to my own day in Angus' machine."

"Then why don't you want it built?"

"Because Angus explained to me that I was wrong. The machines are slightly different. I can travel on my own, but not his. He can travel on his own, but not mine. Result, I'm trapped here. Unless

150

"Unless what?"

"Unless I can prevent Angus from completing his machine. If it's destroyed, my own machine would have been impossible because, as I have said, most of my work is based on Angus'. You'll help me?"

"No," I said. "Why should I?"

"Because I cannot stand living in your barbarous age. Because I want to return home to the world I understand."

"Hell," I said, "Angus is as good as my client right now."

"I will give you," the well-preserved middle aged man said, "ten thousand dollars to help me destroy Angus Haney's time machine."

"And win or lose you won't have my family try to kill me any more?"

"Win or lose," he said.

Great-great — I got to call him that because I never learned his name—waited for my answer while I did some of the fast thinking a private dick has to do every working day of his life. When opportunity knocks, a private dick can't pass it up. He won't keep his shingle up long if he does because the work isn't exactly steady. This, obviously, was opportunity. Ten thousand bucks worth. And ten G's in one lump sum looked a lot better than Angus Haney's indefinite hundred a week.

Did that mean I was turning

on Angus Haney? Well, it's a cinch I wouldn't have been booted out of the fraternity of private eyes for it because despite what you read to the contrary in the two-bit shamus books — of noble impulses and motives pure as chivalry — a private eye is for number one and that's the end of it.

"Mister," I said, "you have got yourself a deal. When do I start?"

"You know where Angus Haney lives?"

"He gave me his card."

"Tomorrow. Tommorrow morning. He's working late tonight so he'll sleep late tomorrow. He's putting the finishing touches tonight on the first time machine ever built. In the morning, we destroy it. All right?"

"For ten thousand bucks," I said, "I'd destroy the Taj Mahal."

IT was a cold clear morning. I didn't call home because I couldn't face the wife and kid, not for a while. I had accused them of trying to kill me and it was true enough but they had no recollection of it. I still had the wife's car with me, but she could pick up mine at the service station on her own way to work.

I was too excited to eat breakfast. It isn't every morning you start out to earn ten thousand dollars.

I drove across town to the address on Angus Haney's card. Great-great was already waiting for me, and pacing the sidewalk impatiently. The frown lifted when he saw me and you could actually see him relax down to the tips of his toes.

"I can take care of the machine," he said. "You watch for Angus. If Angus tries to stop me, you take care of Angus. All right?"

I nodded and we went around the side of the house, where Angus Haney had planted rhododendron and azaleas. Me, I don't care much for plants — I only know the names because my wife makes such a fuss about them.

"In the cellar," Great-great whispered. "I have a key."

"How did you get a key?"

"In my own time this house is preserved as a museum. I simply made a key from the restored model."

In silence we approached the cellar door. A look at my wristwatch told me it was seven-thirty. If Angus Haney had worked late last night he would probably still be asleep. The job would be a lead-pipe cinch.

I watched my companion slip a key into the lock. In a moment, the door stood ajar and I was peering down a steep flight of bare wood steps. Nodding at each other,

we began to go down.

We stopped short at the foot of the staircase. There was someone down there.

"I thought you said he'd be sleeping," I protested, barely forming the words with my lips.

"I'm sure he's asleep — but I didn't know he'd sleep down in the cellar. Apparently he didn't want to leave the machine even for a minute."

Faint light entered the cellar through the small high windows. At first I saw nothing but the usual clutter of basement junk, but then in the far corner beyond the water tank I saw something which didn't belong. Make that two things. First, there was a man asleep on a cot. Second, there was this machine.

For all I know of gadgets, it could have been a super-powered ham radio set. But a ham doesn't come complete with a glass enclosed compartment big enough for a man.

We stalked across the floor, Great-great pausing to pick something up. It was a length of steel pipe and with it he wouldn't have much trouble demolishing Angus Haney's untried time machine.

This was it. This was my big day. Ten thousand bucks for almost nothing. I looked at the plump man sleeping on the cot in

front of his invention. I felt no remorse. His adversary had made a better offer, so what the hell could he expect?

All at once, things happened fast. Great-great stumbled over something and went reeling across the room. He was so surprised that he shouted, "But it doesn't belong there! I couldn't have tripped over it! It isn't in the restoration, I tell you."

I didn't have time to point out that the restoration might not be quite accurate. Because the commotion woke up Angus Haney.

He came springing off the cot — fully awake and alarmed in the split-second it took to open his eyes.

"You'll have to kill me first!" he cried, moving in front of the machine and preparing to defend it like a mother lion defends her cubs.

My companion ignored him, trying to work around behind him toward the time machine. I advanced straight for Angus Haney.

"Be sensible, jack," I said, "and you won't get hurt. I'm bigger than you are and I know how to fight. I don't want to hurt you, but —"

HE turned away from me, though, and lunged at Great-great. I dove at him in a street clothes version of the flying

tackle and we went down together. Angus Haney was stronger than I had expected. Or maybe it wasn't that. Maybe he was fighting with desperation. Because the machine meant everything to him.

Well, the ten grand wasn't exactly chicken feed to me, either. If Angus was going to fight back, I had to play rough. I clubbed him across the mouth with my right fist and his lips became a bloody smear, but he kept kicking and twisting and writhing to get at his relative, who stood poised now over the time machine with the length of steel pipe.

"Don't!" Angus Haney screamed, and rolled clear of me. He was on his feet in an instant and wrestling to get the pipe from my companion.

"If I destroy it, you fool," the man who hadn't been born yet said, "I won't build my own version of it and won't be trapped back here in your twentieth century. You can't stop me."

But Angus, who outweighed his antagonist, had other ideas. In the brief time it took me to climb to my feet and reach them, the metal pipe went clattering away across the floor and Angus was wrestling his relative away from the time machine. I grabbed Angus' shoulder and swung him

around and hit him. He dropped like a stone and, with a whoop of triumph, my companion scrambled after the heavy metal pipe.

Angus was down but not out. I'll have to say this for him; he had guts. He was on his feet again before Great-great could reach the machine.

I'll never forget that scene. For a moment time seemed to be suspended. Great-great stood poised with the metal pipe at the top of its arc, ready to bring it down with crushing force on the delicate control bank of the machine. Angus seemed to stop in mid-air as he leaped for the pipe. Immediately behind him was the glass-enclosed booth of the machine. Or—and this is important—it was glass-enclosed on three sides. The fourth side was nothing but air.

I caught Angus around the waist and pulled him back. We stumbled away from the machine and then back toward it. Suddenly Angus went limp. It was the oldest trick in the book, but I fell for it. I relaxed my hold on him and, as soon as I did, he became a fury. Something struck the side of my head and the next thing I knew I was staggering toward the time machine.

Just as Great-great brought the heavy metal pipe down.

I staggered inside the glass-en-

closed booth.

There was a loud crashing sound.

And then — unexpectedly — a faint hum — a sudden blurry curtain before my eyes — a rolling seething, billowing mist of white — and a moment of exquisite pain

And Angus Haney's voice from a million miles away: "You're destroying it"

Then blackness like the gulf between the stars.

Or between the centuries.

WELL, that's the story. I'm telling you everything so you'll understand. I am not — repeat, not — crazy. I'm as sane as you are. Of course my emotional responses to your mental tests are different: I'm from the twentieth century.

I know I can't get back. I know a little more ought to be said about my story. Angus failed to stop Great-great, who completely demolished his machine.

How do I know?

Because you never even heard of a successful experiment in time travel here in the twenty-first century. Simple, isn't it.

I wish I knew Great-great's name. If I knew his name and could find him, he'd confirm my story. I know what you're think-

ing. Believe me, I am not a paranoid. I

What's that? His name's Haney, just like Angus Haney? That figures, I guess. George Haney. Well, truck him in for crying out loud. He'll confirm everything I say —

Here he is now. "Well, Jack, am I glad to see you! They think I'm crazy. They're trying to tell me there's no such thing as time travel, but I ought to know. I come from the past. And you ought to know, because you went back there to destroy Angus Haney's prototype of a time machine so you wouldn't build one yourself, based on it, and be trapped back in my century. Right? Incidentally, Jack, you can forget all about the ten grand, just as long as you get me out of here and convince them I'm not crazy."

He stares at me. He's Great-great, all right. He frowns and says, "I could not possibly be interested. I never saw you before in my life. And obviously, there is no such thing as time travel." He shakes his head sadly and starts to leave.

"Wait!" I cry. "You don't understand. I understand now. Of course you wouldn't know. You wouldn't remember. Because if you destroyed Angus Haney's time machine, there wouldn't be any

such thing as time travel and you wouldn't have built your own machine. So you forgot. The episode sort of never existed for you."

"I'm terribly sorry I can't help you, fellow." A genuine look of sympathy in his eyes.

"There's no such thing as time travel. For everybody but me.

I'm the one guy who proved time travel was possible — before the first and only time machine was destroyed."

He leaves. The head medics confer. I know what they're saying. I'm nuts. Time travel is impossible so I must be nuts.

But we know better, don't we?

INTRODUCING the AUTHOR

★ Paul W. Fairman ★

(Concluded From Page 2)

fight in your life. Honestly—!"

"Look! Paul! I understand you're writing under seven or eight names now."

"Yeah but there's just one name for fishing. Sport! Pure sport. Why don't you take a couple of weeks and come up here, Bill?"

"I'd love to, but Paul—can you at least send me a picture?"

"Why sure, Bill. Just happen to have one. I'm touched that you ask. And about the biog. That touches me too. Glad I could give you the dope. And now I've got to get this bass into the freezer. See you around."

So that was that. As to Fairman the author, we have a little data in the files and in memory. He started around 1947 here in Chicago when we were editing *Amazing* and *Fan-*

tastic under Ray Palmer. He sold his first story to Howard Browne for Z-D's Mammoth Detective. Got right into science-fiction. Also did TV mysteries and radio scripts here in Chicago. Has appeared in the *Saturday Evening Post* and *Ellery Queen's Mystery Magazine*. He's now one of the most prolific science-fiction writers in the business and he likes to fish. (See photo.) The hands and the pants are undoubtedly his.

We feel duty-bound to complete this biog and there's evidently only one way to do it—go east personally after the information. Pretty late in the year now though. Say next spring—when the fishing season opens. Best bass lake in New York State. 5½ pound beauties. Hmmm.

The Editor

We developed Cheery Gum by accident. But it was no accident it lived up to its name — you chew it and life is rosy. All fine and dandy, except —

Everybody's Happy But Me!

by

Frederik Pohl

I just sent my secretary out for a container of coffee and she brought me back instead a lemon Coke.

I can't even really blame her. Who in all the world *can* I blame, except myself? Hazel was a fine secretary to me for fifteen years — good at typing, terrific at brushing off people I didn't want to see, and the queen of them all at pumping office gossip out of the ladies' rest room. She's fuzzy-brained most of the time now, sure. But after all!

I can say this in my own defense, I didn't know exactly what I was getting into. You see, no doubt you remember the doctors

who—
Well, let me start over again on that question because there is some doubt, of course. Let's say *perhaps* you remember the

two doctors and their headline report about cigarettes and lung cancer. It hit us pretty hard at VandenBlumer and Silk, because we've been eating off the Mason-Dixon Tobacco account for twenty years, and once a lot of people began linking "cancer" and "cigarette" in their minds, Mason-Dixon's sales began to look ugly. And we at VB&S didn't like to see sales looking ugly for an account that billed ten million dollars a year.

Of course, what happened first wasn't so bad. Because naturally the first thing the client did was scream like a panther and reach for his checkbook and pour another couple million dollars into special promotions to counteract the bad press. But that couldn't last, and we knew it. VB&S is an advertising agency that takes the



long view. We saw at once that if the client was in serious long-term trouble, no temporary spurt of advertising was going to pull him out of it, and it was time for us to climb up on top of the old mountain and take a good look at what was ahead.

The Chief called a special Plans meeting that morning and laid it on the line for us. "There goes the old fire bell, boys," he said, "and it's up to us to put the fire out. I'm listening."

Baggott cleared his throat and said glumly, "I see by the papers this morning, Chief, that it may

not be so bad after all. Some people say it's just the paper in the cigarettes that's irritating. Maybe if they make them without paper—" Baggott is the account executive for Mason-Dixon, so you can't really blame him for sometimes taking the client's view.

The Chief twinkled. "If they make them without paper, they aren't cigarettes any more, are they? I'm still listening. But let's not wander off into side issues."

None of us wanted to wander off into side issues, so we all looked a little condescendingly at

Baggott for a moment. Finally Ellen Silk raised her hand. "I don't want you to think, Mr. VanderBlumer," she said, "that just because Daddy left me a little stock I'm going to butt in, but — Well, what I want to know is, did you have in mind finding some, uh, new angle to take the public's mind off cancer?"

You have to admire the old man. "Is that your recommendation, my dear?" he inquired fondly, bouncing the ball right back to her.

She said weakly, "I don't know. I'm confused."

"Naturally, my dear," he beamed. "So are we all. Let's see if Charley here can straighten us out a little. Eh?"

He was looking at me. I said at once, "I'm glad you asked me for my opinion, Chief. I've been doing a little thinking, and here's what I've come up with." I ticked the points off on my fingers. "One, tobacco makes you cough and maybe it makes you sick. Two, liquor gives you a hangover and anyway they've got us hamstrung promotionwise—too much regulation. Three, reefers and so on— well, let's just say they're against the law." I slapped the three fingers against the palm of my other hand. "So what's left

for us, Chief? That's my question. Can we come up with something new, something different, something that, one, is not injurious to the health, two, does not give you a hangover, three is not habit-forming and therefore against the law?"

Mr. VandenBlummer said approvingly, "A good piece of thinking, Charley. When you hear that fire bell, you really jump."

Baggott's hand shot up. "Let's get this straight, Chief," he demanded. "Is it Charley's idea that we recommend to Mason-Dixon that they go out of the tobacco business in favor of something else?"

The Chief looked at him thoughtfully for a moment. "Why does it have to be Mason-Dixon?" he asked blandly, and left it at that, while we all thought of the very good reason why it shouldn't be Mason-Dixon. After all, loyalty to a client is one thing, but you've got an obligation to your own people too.

The old man let it sink in, then he turned back to me. "Well, Charley? You've pinpointed what we need. Now do you have any specific suggestions to make?"

They were all looking at me to see if I had anything concrete to offer.

Unfortunately, I had.

I just asked Hazel to bring me the folder on Leslie Clary Cloud, and what she came up with was a copy of my original memo putting him on the payroll, two years back.

"That's all there was in the file, boss-man," she said dreamily, her jaw muscles moving in a slow rhythm. There wasn't any use arguing with her. I just handed her the container of lemon Coke and told her to ditch it and bring me back some coffee, C-O-F-F-E-E, *coffee*. After she was gone I tried looking through the files myself, but *that* was a waste of time.

So I'll have to tell you about Leslie Clary Cloud from memory.

He came into the office, the first time, without an appointment, and why Hazel ever let him get through to see me I'll never know. But she did. He told me right away. "I've been fired, Mr. McGory. Canned. After eleven years with the Wyoming Bureau of Standards as a senior chemist."

"That's too bad, Dr. Cloud," I said, shuffling the papers on my desk. "I'm afraid our staff is pretty well—"

"No, no," he said hastily. "I don't want to join your staff. Organic chemistry's my field. I have a, well, a suggestion for a process that might interest you. I under-

stand you people handle the Mason-Dixon Tobacco advertising, don't you? Well, in my work for my doctorate I —" He drifted off into a fog of long-chain molecules and short-chain molecules and pentose sugars and common garden plants with Latin names. It took me a little while, but as long as I couldn't brush him off I listened patiently. And I began to see what he was driving at.

There was, he was saying, a substance in a common plant, which by cauliflammng the whingdrop and di-tricolating the residual glom, or words something like that, you could convert into another substance entirely, which appeared to have many features in common with what is sometimes called hop, snow or joydust. In other words, dope.

I stared at him aghast. "Doctor Cloud," I demanded, "do you know what you're suggesting? If we added this stuff to our clients' cigarettes we'd be flagrantly violating the law! It's utterly out of the question. Besides, we've already looked into the matter and the cost estimates—"

"No, no!" he said again. "You don't understand, Mr. McCory. This isn't any of the drugs currently available that I'm talking about. It's something brand new and very different."

"Different?"

"Non-habit-forming, for instance."

"Non-habit-forming?"

"Totally. I guarantee that unconditionally. Chemically it is unrelated to any narcotic in the pharmacopeia. Legally—well, I'm not a lawyer, of course, but I swear, Mr. McGory, this isn't covered by any regulation. There's no reason it should be. It doesn't hurt the user, it doesn't form a habit, it's cheap to manufacture, it—"

"Hold it, Cloud," I interrupted, getting to my feet. "You sit right there for a minute. I want to catch the boss before he goes to lunch."

SO I caught the boss and he twinkled thoughtfully at me for a moment, his arms half into his overcoat.

No, he didn't want to discuss it with Mason-Dixon just yet, and yes, it did seem to have some possibilities, and certainly put this man Cloud on a retainer and see if he turns up with something.

So we did. And he did.

Auditing raised the roof when the vouchers began to come through, but I bucked them up to the Chief and he straightened them out in a hurry. It took a lot of money, though, and it took

nearly six months. But then Leslie Clary Cloud called up one morning and said: "Come on down, Mr. McGory. We're in."

The place we had fixed up for him was down on the lower East Side and it reeked of rotten vegetables. I reminded myself to take a good cold second look at our a d d e d-chlorophyll copy and climbed the two flights of stairs to Cloud's private room. He was sitting propped against a lab bench beaming at a row of filled test tubes.

"This is it?" I asked, glancing at the test tubes.

"This is it." He smiled dreamily at me and yawned. "Excuse me," he blinked amiably. "I've been sampling the little old product."

I looked him over carefully. He had been sampling something or other all right, that was clear enough. But there wasn't any whiskey breath; there were no dilated pupils, no shakes, no nothing. He was relaxed and cheerful, and that was all you could say.

"Try a little old bit," he invited, waving at the test-tubes.

I swallowed hard. Well, I told myself, there were times when you had to pay your dues in the club. VB&S had been mighty good to me, and if I had to take a dose of that witch's brew Cloud had cooked up in order to justify the

confidence the Chief had placed in me, why then I just had to go ahead and do it — I told myself.

"Aw," said Leslie Clary Cloud, "don't be scared. Look, I'll take another shot myself." He fumbled one of the test tubes out of the rack and, humming to himself, slopped a little of the colorless stuff into a beaker of some other colorless stuff. I suppose it was water. He drank it down and smacked his lips. "Tastes awful," he observed, "but we'll fix that. Wheel!"

I looked him over again, and he looked back at me, giggling. "Too strong," he said cheerfully. "Got it too bleeding strong. Wow-ee! We'll fix that too." He rattled beakers and test tubes absent-mindedly while I took a deep breath and nerved myself up to the trial.

"All right," I said.

I took a fresh beaker out of his hand. I swallowed it down almost in one gulp.

It tasted terrible, just as he had said, tasted like the lower floors of his den had smelled, but that was all I noticed right away. Nothing else happened, for a moment. Except that Cloud frowned thoughtfully at the empty beaker in my hand.

"Say," he said, "I guess I should have diluted that."

I guess he should have. Wham.

BUT a couple of hours later I was all right again.

Cloud was plenty apologetic.

"Still," he said consolingly, standing over where I lay on the lab bench, "it proves one thing. An overdose isn't fatal. You had about the equivalent of ten thousand normal shots, and you have to admit it hasn't hurt you."

"I do?" I asked, and squinted at the doctor, who swung his stethoscope by the earpieces and shrugged.

"There's nothing organically wrong with you, Mr. McGory," he conceded. "Not that I can find anyway. Euphoria, yes. Plenty of it. Temporarily high pulse, yes. Delirium there for a little while, yes—though it was pretty mild. But I don't think you even have a headache now."

"I don't," I admitted. I swung my feet down and, rather apprehensively, sat up. But no hammers started in my head. I had to confess it: I felt wonderful.

So we got rid of the doctor and got to work. Between us, we tinkered it into what Cloud decided would be a "normal" dose—just enough to make you feel good—and he saturated some sort of a powder and rolled it into pellets and clamped them into a press and came out with what looked as much like aspirins as anything else: "And

they'd probably work as well too," he said. "At least a psychogenic headache would melt away in five seconds with one of these."

"We'll bear that in mind," I said.

What with one thing and another, I didn't get back to the office before the old man left, and next day was the weekend and you *don't* disturb the Chief's weekends, and it was late Monday before I could get him alone long enough to give him the whole pitch. He was delighted.

"Dear, dear," he twinkled, holding up a couple of the little pills in his hand. "So much out of so little. Why, they hardly look like anything at all."

"Try one, Chief," I suggested.

"Perhaps I will, perhaps I will. You've checked the legal angles?"

"And up and down the line, on the quiet. Absolutely clean."

He nodded, and poked at the pills with his finger. I scratched the back of my neck—as inconspicuously as possible, but the Chief doesn't miss much. He looked at me inquiringly.

"Hives," I explained, unwillingly. "I, uh, got an overdose the first time, like I say. I don't know much about these things, but what they told me at the clinic was I set up an allergy. They said it was a textbook case—sensitization from a

massive initial dose of an unfamiliar allergen and so on."

"Um." He pursed his lips. "Allergy, eh?" That doesn't sound so good, Charley. We don't want to spread allergies with this stuff, do we?"

"Oh, no, no danger of that, Chief," I said hastily. "I checked that too. It's Cloud's fault, in a way. He was load—that is, he was a little excited, and he handed me an undiluted dose of this stuff and I drank it down. The clinic was very positive about that. Even a hundred times the normal dose won't do you any harm."

"Um." He rolled one of the pills between thumb and forefinger and sniffed it thoughtfully. "How about your hives?"

"They'll go away. I just have to keep away from the stuff. I, well, I wouldn't have them now, except that I kind of liked the stuff, and I tried another shot yesterday." I coughed, and added: "It works out pretty well, though. You see how it leaves us, Chief. I *have* to give it up—and I'm here to swear that it isn't any job, to do. I got more of it into my system in five minutes than any normal user would in five years, but I can swear there's no craving, no shakes, no kick-off symptoms, no anything like that."

"You don't even miss it?"

I shrugged. "Like any kind of fun, Chief. I'm sorry it's over. But Cloud told the simple truth. It isn't habit-forming."

"Um," he said again, and that was the end of the discussion for then.

Oh, the Chief is a cagey man. He gave me my orders: Keep my face shut about it. I have an idea that he was waiting to see what happened to my hives; and whether any belated craving would develop, and what the test series on Cloud's animals and Bowery-dere-lict volunteers would show. But even more, I think he was waiting until the time was exactly, climatically right.

Like at the Plans meeting, the day after the doctor's report and the panic at Mason-Dixon.

And that's how Cheery-Gum was born.

HAZEL just came in with a cardboard container from the drug store, and I could tell by looking at it (no steam coming out from under the lid, little beads of moisture clinging to the sides) that it wasn't the coffee I had ordered.

"Hey!" I yelled after her as she was dreamily waltzing out of the door. "Come back here!"

"Sure enough, Massa," she said obediently, and two-stepped back. "S'matter?"

I took a firm grip on my temper. I ordered: "Open that up and take a good look at what's inside."

She smiled cheerfully at me and plopped the lid off the container. "Service with a smile," she began, as half the contents spilled across my desk.

"Oh, dear," she said. "Excuse me while I get a cloth and—"

"Never mind the cloth!" I ordered mopping at the mess with my handkerchief. "What's in there?"

She gazed wonderingly into the container for a moment; then she caught her breath. "Oh, honestly, boss," she said, provoked. "I see what you mean. Those idiots in the drug store, they're gummed up morning, noon and night. I always say, if you can't handle it, you shouldn't touch it during working hours. No lemon! How can they call it a lemon Coke when—"

"Hazel," I said forcefully, "what I wanted was coffee."

"Coffee?"

"Coffee!"

"Oh." She looked at me for a moment, frowning. "You mean I got it wrong. I'm awfully sorry, boss. I'll go right down and get it now."

She smiled repentantly and hummed her way out the door. With her hand on the knob, her jaws moving rhythmically, she stopped and

turned to look at me. "All the same, Massa," she said amiably, "that's a funny combination, coffee and Coke. But I'll see what I can do."

And she was gone, to bring me heaven knows what incredible concoction. But what are you going to do?

No, that's no answer. I know it's what you would do, but it makes me break out in hives.

THE first week we were delighted, the second week we were rapidly becoming millionaires.

The sixth week I sulked along the sidewalks, all the way across town and down, on my way to see Leslie Clary Cloud. And even so, I almost got it when a truckdriver piled dreamily into a glass-fronted saloon a couple of yards behind me.

When I saw Cloud sitting at his workbench, feet propped up, hands clasped behind his head, eyes half-closed, I could almost have kissed him. For his jaws were not moving. Alone in New York, except for me.

"Thank heaven," I said sincerely.

He blinked and smiled at me. "Mr. McGory," he said in a thick but pleasant drawl. "Nice of you."

His manner disturbed me; and I looked more closely. "You're not—you're not gummed up, are you?"

He said gently, "I never chew the

stuff."

"Good!" With shaking hands I unfolded the newspaper I had carried all the way from Madison Avenue. I showed him the inside pages—the only ones that were not a mere smear of ink. "See here Cloud! Planes crashing into Radio City. Buses driving off the George Washington Bridge. Ships going aground at the Battery. We did it, Cloud, you and I! It's our fault!"

"Oh, I wouldn't get all in an uproar," he said comfortably. "All local, isn't it?"

"All local! Isn't that bad enough? And besides, how would we know if it was all local or not? There's damp little communication with the rest of the country. The shipments of Cheery-Gum get through and that's about all. Because that's all anybody cares about any more!"

He said with deep sympathy; "That's too bad, Mr. McGory. My goodness, yet."

I shrieked at him, "Curse you, you said it wasn't a drug! You said it wasn't habit-forming, you said—"

"Now, now," he said, gentle and firm. "Chew a stick yourself: why don't you?"

"Because I can't!"

"Oh, the hives." He looked self-reproachful. He was silent for a moment, meditative. "Well," he said dreamily at last, "that's about the

size of it, Mr. McGory."

"What is?"

He looked at me "What is what?"

"What's about the size—Oh, the devil with it. Cloud, you got us into this, you'll have to get us out of it. There must be some way of curing this habit!"

"But there isn't any habit to cure, Mr. McGory," he pointed out.

"But there is."

"Temper," he said waggishly, and took a corked test tube out of his workbench. He drank it down, every drop, and tossed the tube in a wastebasket.

I caught his eye, but he hadn't the grace to blush. "You see?" he asked. "I told you I didn't chew Cheery-Gum."

So I appealed to a Higher Authority.

as he kept saying, a drug; and though it makes you relaxed and makes you happy and, if you take enough of it, makes you drunk, it does not make you unfit to talk to.

So I took a grip on my temper, the only bad temper left, and told him what I wanted.

He laughed at me—in the friendliest way, of course. "Put a stop to Cheery-Gum?" he echoed. "Mr. McGory."

"But the plane crashes—"

"No more suicides, Mr. McGory."

"The train wrecks—"

"Not a murder or a mugging in the whole city. Not a threat of war!"

I said helplessly, "But it's wrong."

"Ah," he said in the tone of a discoverer, "now we come down to it. Why is it 'wrong', Mr. McGory?"

That was the second time I almost walked out.

But I said, instead: "Let's get something straight. I'm not here to have you dig into my problems. Cheery-Gum is wrong and I am not biased against it. You can take a detached view of accidents and sudden death if you like, but what about slow death? What about the death of the mind? All over the country, people are lousing up on

IN the Eighteenth Century I might have gone to a representative of the church. In the Nineteenth, to the State. I went to an office fronting on Central Park where the name on the bronze door plaque was Theodor Yust, Analyst.

It didn't come easy. I almost walked out on him when I saw that his jaws were chewing as rhythmically as his secretary's. But where else was there to go.

Besides Cloud's concoction is not,

their jobs. Nobody cares. Nobody does more than go through motions. They're happy. What's going to happen when they begin to starve because the farmers are feeling too good to put in their crops?"

He sighed patiently. "That's not going to happen, Mr. McGory," he said. He took the wad of gum out of his mouth, rolled it neatly into Kleenex and dropped it into the wastebasket. He took a fresh stick out of a drawer and was beginning to unwrap it when he saw me looking at him.

He chuckled. "Rather I didn't? Well, why not oblige you. It's not habit-forming after all." He dropped the gum back into the drawer and said: "Answering your questions, they won't starve. The farmers are farming, the workers are working, the policemen are policing and I'm analyzing. And you're worrying. Why? Maybe nobody's concentrating very hard, but how many jobs need it. Work's getting done."

"But my secretary—" I floundered.

"Forget about your secretary, Mr. McGory. Sure, she's a little fuzzy-brained, a little absent-minded. Who isn't? But she comes to work, doesn't she? Because she kind of likes to—everyone likes to do something."

"Sure she does, but how useful is she at her job?"

He looked at me quietly. "For that matter," he said, "how useful is the job?" He let it sink in for a moment. Then he said: "She's happy. Let her be happy, Mr. McGory."

I looked at him, scandalized. "And you're a doctor! How can you say that? Suppose you were all gummed up and a patient desperately needed—"

He stopped me. "In the past three weeks," he said gently, "you're the first to come in that door."

I changed tack. "All right," I said, "you're a pcyschoanalyst. But what about GPs and surgeons?"

He shrugged. "Perhaps," he conceded, "perhaps one case out of a thousand—somebody hurt in an accident, say—he'd get to the hospital late, or the surgeon's reflexes would be a fraction too slow. Perhaps. Not even one in a thousand. One in a million; maybe. But Cheery-Gum isn't a drug. A quarter-grain of sodium amytal, and your surgeon's as good as new." Absent-mindedly he reached into the drawer for the stick of gum.

"And you say," I accused, "that it isn't habit-forming!"

HE stopped with his hand halfway to his mouth. "Well," he said wryly, "it is a habit, in a way. Don't confuse semantics, Mr. McGory. It is not a narcotic addic-

tion. I can stop it at any moment and go as long as I like, and then take it up again if I wish—under my complete voluntary control. If my supply were cut off this minute, I would be very sorry—as sorry as if, for some reason, I couldn't play bridge any more. And no worse." He put the stick of gum away again and rummaged through the bottom drawers of his desk until he found a dusty pack of cigarettes. He lit one. "Used to smoke three packs a day," he wheezed, choking on the first drag.

He wiped his streaming eyes. "You know, Mr. McGory," he said sharply, "you're a bit of a prig. You don't want people to be happy."

I gasped and exploded, "I—"

"Hold it!" He stopped me before I could work up to critical mass. "Wait. Don't think that you're the only person who cares about what's good for the world. When I first heard of Cheery-Gum, I worried." He stubbed the cigarette out distastefully, still talking. "Euphoria is well and good, I said, but what about emergencies? Just like you. And I looked around and there weren't any emergencies to speak of. Things were getting done. Maybe slowly and erratically, but they were getting done. And then I said, on a plane of high moral integrity, that's all well and good, but what

about the ultimate destiny of man? What about idealism basic values? Should the world be populated by cheerful semi-morons? And that worried me pretty much. Until I began to look at my patients."

He smiled reflectively. "I had 'em all, Mr. McGory. You name it, I had it coming to see me twice a week. The worst wrecks of psyches you ever saw, twisted and warped and destroying themselves with fear and shame. And they stopped. They stopped eating themselves up with worry and tension. And then they weren't my patients any more. And what's more—they weren't morons, either. Give them a stimulus, they respond. Interest them, they react."

He leaned forward, clasping his hands on his desk. He said: "The other night I played bridge with a woman who was catatonic a month ago. She beat the hell out of me. And we had to put the first stick of gum in her mouth for her, and move her jaws. And I had a mathematician coming here who—well, never mind. It was bad enough. He's happy as a clam, and the last time I saw him he had finished a paper he began ten years ago, and wouldn't touch for the last nine. Stimulate them, they respond. When things are dull, Cheery-Gum. What could be better?"

I looked at him dully and said:

"So you can't help me?"

"I didn't say that. Do you want me to help you,"

"Certainly!"

"Then answer my question. Why don't you chew a stick yourself?"

"Because I can't!" It all tumbled out, the Plans meeting and Leslie Clary Cloud and the beaker that hadn't been diluted and the hives. "A *terrific* allergy!" I emphasized. "Anti-histamines don't help. They said at the clinic that the anti-bodies form after a massive initial—"

He said comfortably, "Some over psyche, eh? Well, what would you expect? But believe me, Mr. McGory, the human organism does not split down the middle as neatly as that, and allergies may not be psychogenic; but we can treat them as if they are. Now, if you'll just—"

WELL, if you can't lick 'em, join 'em; that's what the old man used to say. So I guess I shouldn't have walked out.

But I can't join them now. Theodor Yust offered me an invitation, and I guess I was pretty rude to him. And when at last I went back, ready to crawl and apologize, there was a scrawled piece of cardboard over the bronze nameplate. It said: *Gone fishing.*

I tried to lay it on the line with the Chief. I opened the door of the Plans room, and there he was with

Baggott and Wayber, from Mason-Dixon. They were whittling out model ships, and so intent on what they were doing that they hardly noticed me.

After a moment the Chief said idly, "Bankrupt yet?" And moments passed before Wayber absent-mindedly replied:

"Bankrupt. Um, guess so. Have to file some papers, I guess." And they went on with their whittling.

So I spoke to them, rather sharply. And the minute they looked up and saw me there it was like the Rockettes, a precision routine: All three of them synchronized, the hands into the pockets, the gum unwrapped, the gum into the mouth. And I didn't even try to talk to them after that. They were *happy*. They didn't want to be bothered. So what are you going to do?

No! I can't!

Hazel hardly ever comes in to see me any more, even. I bawled her out for it, of course—what, I demanded, would happen if I suddenly had to answer a letter? But she only smiled gently. "There hasn't been a letter in a month," she pointed out.

"But suppose—"

"Aw, don't worry, Marse Charles," she begged amiably. "Happen anything does come up, Hazel's here. Right here. This stuff isn't a habit with me, I can stop it any time; you

just call on me and I'm ready . . ."

And she's right, because that's the trouble.

It isn't a habit. So how can you break it?

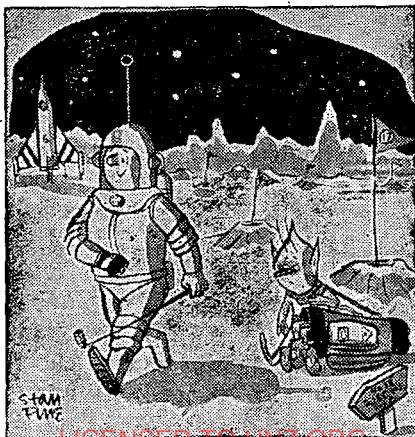
I remember a man trying to explain something to a friend, on a street corner in Greenwich Village, a long time ago. He belonged, he was saying, to Alcoholics Anonymous, and it was a wonderful, wonderful feeling. Because if he ever had one drink too many, if he ever felt that he was on the verge of going on a drunk, all he had to do was to pick up the phone and a fellow-member would be at his side to straighten him out. He was in no danger from alcoholism at all, because A. A. would take care of him any old time he needed them; so he didn't have to worry. He was a little annoyed because his friend

just stood there, silent and unmoving; but not annoyed enough to let go of him and walk away. Because his friend was a lamp-post, and if he had let go he would have fallen flat on his face.

I don't suppose he had quite captured the spirit of A. A.; but to him it made The Cure so simple and instant and available that there was no hurry about taking it. Tomorrow would do. Or the next day . . .

Like Cheery-Gum. You can stop it any old time. The easiest thing in the world. Now, who is going to deprive himself of a pleasure just to accomplish the easiest thing in the world?

I sit here, and talk into the telephone, and sometimes I get an answer and sometimes I don't. I wish Theodore Yust would come back. He's got to cure my hives . . .



To Serve The Master

by

Philip K. Dick

Applequist came upon the robot quite by accident, a pitiful mass of broken and rusted metal. Yet miraculously — it was still alive!

APPLEQUIST was cutting across a deserted field, up a narrow path beside the yawning crack of a ravine, when he heard the voice.

He stopped frozen, hand on his S-pistol. For a long time he listened, but there was only the distant lap of the wind among the broken trees along the ridge, a hollow murmuring that mixed with the rustle of the dry grass beside him. The sound had come from the ravine. Its bottom was snarled and debris-filled. He crouched down at the lip and tried to locate the voice.

There was no motion. Nothing to give away the place. His legs began to ache. Flies buzzed at him, settled on his sweating forehead. The sun made his head ache; the dust clouds had been thin the last few months.

His radiation-proof watch told him it was three o'clock. Finally

he shrugged and got stiffly to his feet. The hell with it. Let them send out an armed team. It wasn't his business; he was a letter carrier grade four, and a civilian.

As he climbed the hill toward the road, the sound came again. And this time, standing high above the ravine, he caught a flash of motion. Fear and puzzled disbelief touched him. It couldn't be—but he had seen it with his own eyes. It wasn't a newscircular rumor.

What was a robot doing down in the deserted ravine? All robots had been destroyed years ago. But there it lay, among the debris and weeds. A rusted, half-corroded wreck. Calling feebly up at him as he passed along the trail.

THE Company defense ring admitted him through the three-stage lock into the tunnel area.



He descended slowly, deep in thought all the way down to the organizational level. As he slid off his letter pack Assistant Supervisor Jenkins hurried over.

"Where the hell have you been? It's almost four."

"Sorry." Applequist turned his S-pistol over to a nearby guard.

"What are the chances of a five hour pass? There's something I want to look into."

"Not a chance. You know they're scrapping the whole right wing set-up. They need everybody on strict twenty-four hour alert."

Applequist began sorting letters. Most were personals between big-

shot supervisors of the North American Companies. Letters to entertainment women beyond the Company peripheries. Letters to families and petitions from minor officials. "In that case," he said thoughtfully, "I'll have to go anyhow."

Jenkins eyed the young man suspiciously. "What's going on? Maybe you found some undamaged equipment left over from the war. An intact cache, buried someplace. Is that it?"

Applequist almost told him, at that point. But he didn't. "Maybe," he answered indifferently. "It's possible."

Jenkins shot him a grimace of hate and stalked off to roll aside the doors of the observation chamber. At the big wall map officials were examining the day's activities. Half a dozen middle-aged men, most of them bald, collars dirty and stained, lounged around in chairs. In the corner Supervisor Rudde was sound asleep, fat legs stuck out in front of him, hairy chest visible under his open shirt. These were the men who ran the Detroit Company. Ten thousand families, the whole subsurface living-shelter, depended on them.

"What's on your mind?" a voice rumbled in Applequist's ear. Director Laws had come into the chamber and, as usual, taken him

unawares.

"Nothing, sir," Applequist answered. But the keen eyes, blue as china, bored through and beneath. "The usual fatigue. My tension index is up. I've been meaning to take some of my leave, but with all the work . . ."

"Don't try to fool me. A fourth-class letter carrier isn't needed. What are you really getting at?"

"Sir," Applequist said bluntly, "why were the robots destroyed?"

There was silence. Laws' heavy face registered surprise, then hostility. Before he could speak Applequist hurried on: "I know my class is forbidden to make theoretical inquiries. But it's very important I find out."

"The subject is closed," Laws rumbled ominously. "Even to top-level personnel."

"What did the robots have to do with the war? Why was the war fought? What was life like before the war?"

"The subject," Laws repeated, "is closed." He moved slowly toward the wall map and Applequist was left standing alone, in the middle of the clicking machines, among the murmuring officials and bureaucrats.

Automatically, he resumed sorting letters. There had been the war, and robots were involved in it. That much he knew. A few had

survived; when he was a child his father had taken him to an industrial center and he had seen them at their machines. Once, there had been more complex types. Those were all gone; even the simple ones would soon be scrapped. Absolutely no more were manufactured.

"What happened?" he had asked, as his father dragged him away. "Where did all the robots go?"

No answer then either. That was sixteen years ago, and now the last had been scrapped. Even the memory of robots was disappearing; in a few years the word itself would cease. *Robots*. What had happened?

He finished with the letters and moved out of the chamber. None of the supervisors noticed; they were arguing some erudite point of strategy. Maneuvering and counter-maneuvering among the Companies. Tension and exchanged insults. He found a crushed cigarette in his pocket and inexpertly lit up.

"Dinner call," the passage speaker announced tinnily. "One hour break for top class personnel."

A few supervisors filed noisily past him. Applequist crushed out his cigarette and moved toward his station. He worked until six. Then his dinner hour came up. No other break until Saturday. But if he went without dinner . . .

The robot was probably a low-

order type, scrapped with the final group. The inferior kind he had seen as a child. It couldn't be one of the elaborate war-time robots. To have survived in the ravine, rusting and rotting through the years since the war . . .

His mind skirted the hope. Heart pounding, he entered a lift and touched the stud. By night-fall he'd know.

THE robot lay among heaps of metal slag and weeds. Jagged, rusted fragments barred Applequist's way as he moved cautiously down the side of the ravine, S-gun in one hand, radiation mask pulled tight over his face.

His counter clicked loudly: the floor of the ravine was hot. Pools of contamination, over the reddish metal fragments, the piles and masses of fused steel and plastic and gutted equipment. He kicked webs of blackened wiring aside and gingerly stepped past the yawning fuel-tank of some ancient machine, now overgrown with vines. A rat scuttled off. It was almost sunset. Dark shadows lay over everything.

The robot was watching him silently. Half of it was gone; only the head, arms, and upper trunk remained. The lower waist ended in shapeless struts, abruptly sliced off. It was clearly immobile. Its whole surface was pitted and corroded.

One eye-lens was missing. Some of its metal fingers were bent grotesquely. It lay on its back facing the sky.

It was a war-time robot, all right. In the one remaining eye glinted archaic consciousness. This was not the simple worker he had glimpsed as a child. Applequist's breath hammered in his throat. "This was the real thing. It was following his movements intently. It was alive.

All this time, Applequist thought. All these years. The hackles of his neck rose. Everything was silent, the hills and trees and masses of ruin. Nothing stirred; he and the ancient robot were the only living things. *Down here in this crack waiting for somebody to come along.*

A cold wind rustled at him and he automatically pulled his overcoat together. Some leaves blew over the inert face of the robot. Vines had crept along its trunk, twisted into its works. It had been rained on; the sun had shone on it. In winter the snow had covered it. Rats and animals had sniffed at it. Insects had crawled through it. And it was still alive.

"I heard you," Applequist muttered. "I was walking along the path."

Presently the robot said, "I know. I saw you stop." Its voice was faint and dry. Like ashes rub-

bing together. Without quality or pitch. "Would you make the date known to me? I suffered a power failure for an indefinite period. Wiring terminals shorted temporarily."

"It's June 11," Applequist said. "2136," he added.

The robot was obviously hoarding its meager strength. It moved one arm slightly, then let it fall back. Its one good eye blurred over, and deep within, gears whirled rustily. Realization came to Applequist: the robot might expire any moment. It was a miracle it had survived this long. Snails clung to its body. It was criss-crossed with slimy trails. A century . . .

"How long have you been here?" he demanded. "Since the war?"

"Yes."

Applequist grinned nervously. "That's a long time. Over a hundred years."

"That's so."

IT was getting dark fast. Automatically, Applequist fumbled for his flashlight. He could hardly make out the sides of the ravine. Someplace a long way off a bird croaked dismally in the darkness. The bushes rustled.

"I need help," the robot said. "Most of my motor equipment

was destroyed. I can't move from here."

"In what condition is the rest of you? Your energy supply. How long can—"

"There's been considerable cell destruction. Only a limited number of relay circuits still function. And those are overloaded." The robot's one good eye was on him again. "What is the technological situation? I have seen air-borne ships fly overhead. You still manufacture and maintain electronic equipment?"

"We operate an industrial unit near Pittsburgh."

"If I describe basic electronic units will you understand?" the robot asked.

"I'm not trained in mechanical work. I'm classed as a fourth grade letter carrier. But I have contacts in the repair department. We keep our own machines functioning." He licked his lips tensely. "It's risky, of course. There are laws."

"Laws?"

"All robots were destroyed. You are the only one left. The rest were liquidated years ago."

No expression showed in the robot's eye. "Why did you come down here?" it demanded. Its eye moved to the S-gun in Applequist's hand. "You are a minor official in some hierarchy. Acting on or-

ders from above. A mechanically-operating integer in a larger system."

Applequist laughed. "I suppose so." Then he stopped laughing. "Why was the war fought? What was life like before?"

"Don't you know?"

"Of course not. No theoretical knowledge is permitted, except to top-level personnel. And even the Supervisors don't know about the war." Applequist squatted down and shone the beam of his flashlight into the darkening face of the robot. "Things were different before, weren't they? We didn't always live in subsurface shelters. The world wasn't always a scrap heap. People didn't always slave for their Companies."

"Before the war there were no Companies."

Applequist grunted with triumph. "I knew it."

"Men lived in cities, which were demolished in the war. Companies, which were protected, survived. Officials of these Companies became the government. The war lasted a long time. Everything of value was destroyed. What you have left is a burned out shell." The robot was silent a moment and then continued, "The first robot was built in 1979. By 2000 all routine work was done by robots. Human beings were free to do

what they wanted. Art, science, entertainment, whatever they liked."

"What is art?" Applequist asked.

"Creative work, directed toward realization of an internal standard. The whole population of the earth was free to expand culturally. Robots maintained the world; man enjoyed it."

"What were cities like?"

"Robots rebuilt and reconstructed new cities according to plans drawn up by human artists. Clean, sanitary, attractive. They were the cities of gods."

"Why was the war fought?"

The robot's single eye flickered. "I've already talked too much. My power supply is dangerously low."

Applequist trembled. "What do you need? I'll get it."

"Immediately, I need an atomic A pack. Capable of putting out ten thousand f-units."

"Yes."

"After that I'll need tools and aluminum sections. Low resistance wiring. Bring pen and paper—I'll give you a list. You won't understand it, but someone in electronic maintenance will. A power supply is the first need."

"And you'll tell me about the war?"

"Of course." The robot's dry rasp faded into silence. Shadows

flickered around it; cold evening air stirred the dark weeds and bushes. "Kindly hurry. Tomorrow, if possible."

"I OUGHT to turn you in," Assistant Supervisor Jenkins snapped. "Half an hour late, and now this business. What are you doing? You want to get fired out of the Company?"

Applequist pushed close to the man. "I have to get this stuff. The—cache is below surface. I have to construct a secure passage. Otherwise the whole thing will be buried by falling debris."

"How large a cache is it?" Greed edged suspicion off Jenkins' gnarled face. He was already spending the Company reward. "Have you been able to see in? Are there unknown machines?"

"I didn't recognize any," Applequist said impatiently. "Don't waste time. The whole mass of debris is apt to collapse. I have to work fast."

"Where is it? I want to see it!"

"I'm doing this alone. You supply the material and cover for my absence. That's your part."

Jenkins twisted uncertainly. "If you're lying to me, Applequist—"

"I'm not lying," Applequist answered angrily. "When can I expect the power unit?"

"Tomorrow morning. I'll have to fill out a bushel of forms. Are you sure you can operate it? I better send a repair team along with you. To be sure—"

"I can handle it." Applequist interrupted. "Just get me the stuff. I'll take care of the rest."

MORNING sunlight filtered over the rubble and trash. Applequist nervously fitted the new power pack in place, screwed the leads tight, clamped the corroded shield over it, and then got shakily to his feet. He tossed away the old pack and waited.

The robot stirred. Its eye gained life and awareness. Presently it moved its arm in exploratory motions, over its damaged trunk and shoulders.

"All right?" Applequist demanded huskily.

"Apparently." The robot's voice was stronger; full and more confident. "The old power pack was virtually exhausted. It was fortunate you came along when you did."

"You say men lived in cities," Applequist plunged in eagerly. "Robots did the work?"

"Robots did the routine labor needed to maintain the industrial system. Humans had leisure to enjoy whatever they wanted. We were glad to do their work for

them. It was our job."

"What happened? What went wrong?"

The robot accepted the pencil and paper; as it talked it carefully wrote down figures. "There was a fanatic group of humans. A religious organization. They claimed that God intended man to work by the sweat of his brow. They wanted robots scrapped and men put back in the factories to slave away at routine tasks."

"But why?"

"They claimed work was spiritually ennobling." The robot tossed the paper back. "Here's the list of what I want. I'll need those materials and tools to restore my damaged system."

Applequist fingered the paper. "This religious group—"

Men separated in two factions. The Moralists and the Leisurists. They fought each other for years, while we stood on the sidelines waiting to know our fate. I couldn't believe the Moralists would win out over reason and common sense. But they did."

"Do you think —" Applequist began, and then broke off. He could hardly give voice to the thought that was struggling inside him. "Is there a chance robots might be brought back?"

"Your meaning is obscure." The robot abruptly snapped the pencil

in half and threw it away. "What are you driving at?"

"Life isn't pleasant in the Companies. Death and hard work. Forms and shifts and work periods and orders."

"It's your system. I'm not responsible."

"How much do you recall about robot construction? What were you, before the war?"

"I was a unit controller. I was on my way to an emergency unit-factory, when my ship was shot down." The robot indicated the debris around it. "That was my ship and cargo."

"What is a unit controller?"

"I was in charge of robot manufacture. I designed and put into production basic robot types."

Applequist's head spun dizzily. "Then you do know robot construction."

"Yes." The robot gestured urgently at the paper in Applequist's hand. "Kindly get those tools and materials as soon as possible. I'm completely helpless this way. I want my mobility back. If a rocketship should fly overhead . . ."

"Communication between Companies is bad. I deliver my letters on foot. Most of the country is in ruins. You could work undetected. What about your emergency unit-factory? Maybe it wasn't destroyed."

The robot nodded slowly. "It was carefully concealed. There is the bare possibility. It was small, but completely outfitted. Self-sufficient."

"If I get repair parts, can you —"

"We'll discuss this later." The robot sank back down. "When you return, we'll talk further."

HE got the material from Jenkins, and a twenty-four hour pass. Fascinated, he crouched against the wall of the ravine as the robot systematically pulled apart its own body and replaced the damaged elements. In a few hours a new motor system had been installed. Basic leg cells were welded into position. By noon the robot was experimenting with its pedal extremities.

"During the night," the robot said, "I was able to make weak radio contact with the emergency unit-factory. It exists intact, according to the robot monitor."

"Robot? You mean—"

"An automatic machine for relaying transmission. Not alive, as I am. Strictly speaking, I'm not a robot." Its voice swelled. "I'm an android."

The fine distinction was lost on Applequist. His mind was racing excitedly over the possibilities. "Then we can go ahead. With

your knowledge, and the materials available at the—”

“You didn’t see the terror and destruction. The Moralists systematically demolished us. Each town they seized was cleared of androids. Those of my race were brutally wiped out, as the Leisurists retreated. We were torn from our machines and destroyed.”

“But that was a century ago! Nobody wants to destroy robots any more. We need robots to rebuild the world. The Moralists won the war and left the world in ruins.”

The robot adjusted its motor system until its legs were coordinated. “Their victory was a tragedy, but I understand the situation better than you. We must advance cautiously. If we are wiped out this time, it may be for good.”

Applequist followed after the robot as it moved hesitantly through the debris toward the wall of the ravine. “We’re crushed by work. Slaves in underground shelters. We can’t go on this way. People will welcome robots. We need you. When I think how it must have been in the Golden Age, the foundations and flowers, the beautiful cities above ground . . . Now there’s nothing but ruin and misery. The Moralists won, but nobody’s happy. We’d gladly—”

“Where are we? What is the location here?”

“Slightly west of the Mississippi, a few miles or so. We must have freedom. We can’t live this way, toiling underground. If we had free time we could investigate the mysteries of the whole universe. I found some old scientific tapes. Theoretical work in biology. Those men spent years working on abstract topics. They had the time. They were free. While robots maintained the economic system those men could go out and—”

“During the war,” the robot said thoughtfully, “the Moralists rigged up detection screens over hundreds of square miles. Are those screens still functioning?”

“I don’t know. I doubt it. Nothing outside of the immediate Company shelters still works.”

The robot was deep in thought. It had replaced its ruined eye with a new cell; both eyes flickered with concentration. “Tonight we’ll make plans concerning your Company. I’ll let you know my decision, then. Meanwhile, don’t bring this situation up with anyone. You understand? Right now I’m concerned with the road system.”

“Most roads are in ruins.” Applequist tried hard to hold back his excitement. “I’m convinced most in my Company are—Leis-

urists. Maybe a few at the top are Moralists. Some of the supervisors, perhaps. But the lower classes and families—

"All right," the robot interrupted. "We'll see about that later." It glanced around. "I can use some of that damaged equipment. Part of it will function. For the moment, at least."

APPLEQUIST managed to avoid Jenkins, as he hurriedly made his way across the organizational level to his work station. His mind was in a turmoil. Everything around him seemed vague and unconvincing. The quarreling supervisors. The clattering, humming machines. Clerks and minor bureaucrats hurrying back and forth with messages and memoranda. He grabbed a mass of letters and mechanically began sorting them into their slots.

"You've been outside," Director Laws observed sourly. "What is it, a girl? If you marry outside the Company you lose the little rating you have."

Applequist pushed aside his letters. "Director, I want to talk to you."

Director Laws shook his head. "Be careful. You know the ordinances governing fourth-class personnel. Better not ask any more questions. Keep your mind on

your work and leave the theoretical issues to us."

"Director," Applequist asked, "which side was our Company, Moralist or Leisurist?"

Laws didn't seem to understand the question. "What do you mean? He shook his head. "I don't know those words."

"In the war. Which side of the war were we on?"

"Good God," Law said. "The human side, of course." An expression like a curtain dropped over his heavy face. "What do you mean, *Moralist*? What are you talking about?"

Suddenly Applequist was sweating. His voice would hardly come. "Director, something's wrong. The war was between the two groups of humans. The Moralists destroyed the robots because they disapproved of humans living in leisure."

"The war was fought between men and robots," Laws said harshly. "We won. We destroyed the robots."

"But they worked for us!"

"They were built as workers, but they revolted. They had a philosophy. Superior beings—androids. They considered us nothing, but cattle."

Applequist was shaking all over. "But it told me—"

"They slaughtered us. Millions of humans died, before we got the

upper hand. They murdered, lied, hid, stole, did everything to survive. It was them or us—no quarter." Laws grabbed Applequist by the collar. "You damn fool! What the hell have you done? Answer me! What have you done?"

THE sun was setting, as the armored twin-track roared up to the edge of the ravine. Troops leaped out and poured down the sides, S-rifles clattering. Laws emerged quickly, Applequist beside him.

"This is the place?" Laws demanded.

"Yes." Applequist sagged. "But it's gone."

"Naturally. It was fully repaired. There was nothing to keep it here." Laws signalled his men. "No use looking. Plant a tactical A-bomb and let's get out of here. The air fleet may be able to catch it. We'll spray this area with radioactive gas."

Applequist wandered numbly to the edge of the ravine. Below, in the darkening shadows, were the weeds and tumbled debris. There was no sign of the robot, of course. A place where it had been, bits of

wire and discarded body sections. The old power pack where he had thrown it. A few tools. Nothing else.

"Come on," Laws ordered his men. "Let's get moving. We have a lot to do. Get the general alarm system going."

The troops began climbing the sides of the ravine. Applequist started after them, toward the twin-track.

"No," Laws said quickly. "You're not coming with us."

Applequist saw the look on their faces. The pent-up fear, the frantic terror and hate. He tried to run, but they were on him almost at once. They worked grimly and silently. When they were through they kicked aside his still-living remains and climbed into the twin-track. They slammed the locks and the motor thundered up. The track rumbled down the trail to the road. In a few moments it dwindled and was gone.

He was alone, with the half-buried bomb and the settling shadows. And the vast empty darkness that was collecting everywhere.

THE END

FEATURED NEXT ISSUE:—

THE LEGION OF LAZARUS

by **EDMOND HAMILTON**

A Novel of Deep Space—Where Death Brings Immortality!



Conducted by Mari Wolf

IF you go to a meeting of some large science fiction club you may find yourself wondering what, if anything, its members have in common besides science fiction. Usually you'll find individual members interested in just about everything from astronomy to flying saucers to building sailboats in the basement. So you get used to the idea that most of the people you meet don't have much in common with each other except their absorption in things removed in space and time.

Then when you run into two or three people whom you know are science fiction enthusiasts and find that they're also interested in sports cars, say, this isn't surprising. But if you run into more and more people who're interested in both science fiction and sports cars, and if your fannish friends become addicted to the other field

as soon as introduced to it, then what are you to think?

Coincidence? Some correlation between the two attractions? Or just the fact that your typical science fiction fan is likely to be interested in just about everything a bit out of the ordinary?

For a long time you've found a high percentage of jazz and folk music aficionados among science fictionists. You've found a good many fans who are seriously interested in rocketry and belong to one or another of the amateur rocket societies. (That this latter interest is directly correlated with science fiction is pretty obvious.) But now it's sports cars. To such an extent that on the West Coast at least you'd have just about enough members to form a science fiction racing team.

I became interested in sports cars quite accidentally, and without

knowing anyone else similarly inclined. We went out to buy an MG and found instead a Morris Minor with a V-8 60 engine. For some reason that escapes me in the cold light of hindsight we bought it and raced it at the first Santa Barbara Road Race. It was quite a car; it could out accelerate a Jaguar but had no top speed at all. So now its Morris running gear and another V-8 60 engine are part of a special the boys are building up . . .

But that's getting completely away from the science fiction angle. As I said, we went up to Santa Barbara without knowing anyone else interested in cars. A couple of pits down the line we ran into a San Francisco driver and his screaming red OSCA — to racing fans, the driver, Al Coppell, doesn't need any introduction at all. To science fiction fans, neither does Alfred Coppell.

He was the first. The next, I think, was Larry Shaw, who in addition to editing a science fiction magazine also edits a car magazine, Rodding and Re-styling. (He says that once before when he was with a car mag it seemed that just about every one of his science fiction acquaintances started writing for it . . .)

Among the fans, there are of course, the people and figments of A BAS. Boyd Raeburn and his MG, whether actual, composite, or totally imaginary, are at least extremely well known in fan circles. In fact, I can't remember any other fan magazine that's written up the sports car.

Here on the West Coast, where MGs and Volkswagens are just about as common as Detroit cars,

the science fiction element seems to have taken the plunge all at once. A few months ago Bill Nolan (whom you'll especially remember for his excellent job on the *Bradbury Review*) bought an Austin Healey. He's just had it painted Titian red and is planning on entering it in the next Concourse d'Elegance.

Then there's Charlie Beaumont's Volkswagon, which he just acquired and which he now plans on racing on the West Coast circuit. Nolan will be on his pit crew . . . This should be something to see; for a Volkswagon it seems very fast, and of course in its class it will be competing against other stock VW's and Renaults. Also, being small, light, and not particularly speedy, it's quite unlikely to suffer any serious damage racing.

(We wouldn't dream of racing our Jaguar. Insurance doesn't cover your car while you're in competition, and a brush with a hay bale can easily cost you five hundred dollars or so.)

Roy Squires, who only recently gave up the Science Fiction Advertiser, has another Austin Healey. This too is a going machine . . .

Ranging slightly outside the fan field, Jim Nuding, vice-president and longtime mainstay of the Pacific Rocket Society, started out with a stock MG which he is now having modified. It is going to be a bomb . . . and our racing team should start bringing home the trophies as soon as it gets running.

The group has developed an odd pattern. We meet after some movie prevue or party at the Ackerman's, and we go over to someone's house and discuss sports cars, racing,

writing, and sports cars. This must be very boring to those of our friends who don't like sports cars. There are some. Chad Oliver is one.

(There is the legendary tale of Bill Nolan and Charlie Beaumont taking Chad for a fast lap through the Bel Air hills in Bill's Austin Healey. They came screaming down the road and around a corner, and there in the center of the street, was a large cross ... They missed it, and the precipice on either side, and I guess just about scared Charlie and Bill to death. Chad never did evince any reaction. They've given up trying to fluster him by automobile!)

We all go to the races and work or just watch while everything from Volkswagon to Ferrari goes screaming past. And I still don't know what sports cars have that attracts the fans—unless maybe it's just that they're yesterday's science fictional dream come true.

Anyway, I have a favorite daydream of my own—one that I know, alas, won't ever come true. It's of Bill or Charlie or one of the others tooling around the track in his car, with Ray Bradbury for a pit mechanic.

There may be a correlation between sports cars and science fiction—but alas, it won't ever be that complete.

* * *

Now to the fanzines.
A BAS: 25c; Boyd Raeburn, 9 Glenvalley Drive, Toronto 9, Canada. This is the sixth issue of the zine put out by what Gerald Steward calls a figment of his imagination. Raeburn states, in his editorial, that any fans who still think that he is a mythical, non existent

figure will find their issues of *A Bas* will be non existent also.

The cover of issue six is the best reason for subbing to this zine I've ever seen. It's in color and looks like litho work; I'm not sure of the process, but it's professional. In fact, I'd rate it above a lot of the covers on the late BEYOND. Same type, but very, very good. The reason I mention subbing in connection with the title is that only enough color covers were run off to take care of the subscriptions; all others will get the issue with a rather plain mimeoed cover.

This time they have their usual, very bitter "Derogation," hitting, in order, Pogo, Shakespeare, Jim Harmon, Boggs, Vorzimer, Ellik and undoubtedly others too subtle for us poor Americans to get.

The rest is cluttered up with poetry; good; cool music reviews; accurate; and a screaming reprint from a sports car magazine. Even though the writer is a friend of mine, I still think it's funny.

If *Psychotic* is the 'Atlantic' of the zines, then *A Bas* is a combination of 'New Yorker' and 'Mad.'

Rating: 1

* * *

EISFA: 5c; monthly; Robert and Juanita Coulson, 616 Court St., Huntington, Ind. In this issue the editors Coulson state quite emphatically that *Eisfa* is not primarily a club zine, but is a general interest zine. True, it carries fewer and fewer reports on the activities of the Eastern Indiana Science Fiction Association; but it has always been a general interest periodical, an unpretentious and rather slim mimeoed zine that is an excellent buy at the price.

In this issue there's Ben Gordon's "Let's Put the 'Science' in Science-Fiction." Here comes the same old controversy again, only presented, more vehemently than usual. To Gordon, you shouldn't even try to write s-f unless you are a scientist . . . Anyone for rebuttal?

Hal Annas, in his story "Love Across Time," shows the plight of two lovers who can travel to each other's eras but are unable to survive in them. He tosses in some rather strange sub-concepts, such as the one on the origin of skin coloring. Also, it's hard to picture interbreeding being possible between people adapted to such divergent conditions, even granting that such an adaptation could take place.

Plus instructions on "How to Prepare a Martian Meal."

Rating: 3

* * *

TRIODE: Eric Bentcliffe, 47 All-dis St., Greatmoor, Stockport, Ches., England. The price, if you're in the sterling area, is 9d a copy. If you're in the USA, it's 10c; and you send your dime to Dale R. Smith, 3001 Kyle Ave., Minneapolis, Minn.

Bentcliffe and Terry Jeeves turn out this brightly mimeoed affair that winds its quiet way through the vicissitudes of British fandom. A lot, I fear, is lost on the American reader.

A good many people connected with *Triode* seem to have been visiting Walt Willis lately—John Berry and Mal Ashworth for two. (John Berry gives a fine account of the Willisian game of Ghoddminton.) While not wandering around North Ireland, the staff members seem to

have been continuing their voyage across the Atlantic (I think) on Courteney's Boat, of the Inter-Line. All of British fandom seem to be making this imaginary trip, described this time by Terry Jeeves and Mal Ashworth, a trip which will probably last through another year's subscription to the zine.

Getting away from the personal slant, there's a reprint of Alfred Bester's "What's the Difference?" (between British and American science fiction.) He characterizes Americans and their s-f as nervous, high strung, generous, confused, and wanting the Answer to everything. On the other hand, to him the physical action in English stories never quite rings true . . . You have to read the whole article for yourself to really follow it.

Rating: 3

OBLIQUE: Clifford I. Gould, 1559 Cable St., San Diego 7, Calif. It sells for "50c per single copy or 10c per year—sic." Sic. I suggest you send your dime and wait and see just *what* happens.

Here's a really good new zine (this is the second issue I have here) with an editor who can write a humorous editorial and make it sound as if he means every word of it. Then editor Gould goes on into a deliberately Sturgesesque piece called "More than You, Man, the Eternal Neo-fan."

There's considerable comment on Vorzimer's article in the previous issue—an article advocating that it's the duty of established fans to contribute to struggling young zines. Jan Jansen's article on the subject is especially pertinent. Jansen and *Alpha* have had the special problem of publishing a zine where

there was previously almost no interest in science fiction — in Belgium. Now he plans an all-Continental issue of *Alpha*, written largely by people previously not in fandom at all.

There's also Larry Anderson's bitterly funny "Tips for the Editor of a True Fanzine."

Rating: 4

* * *

VAGABOND: John Murdock, 214 East 11th St., Kansas City 6, Missouri, or Jim White, 7770½ Rosewood Ave., Los Angeles 36, Calif. Until the third issue this will be a Pay After Reading sort of thing. The copy I have here is issue No. 1 and, going by past experience, this should be a very powerful zine in a few months. The mimeography is as good as anything I've seen by mimeo; the illos, while few, are good; and the editors have an appreciation of white space.

The lead off item is a collaboration by G. M. Carr, Isabelle Dinwiddie, Emili Thompson, Olive Morgan and Orma McCormick. Called "Martha and the Genii," it's a rather cute round robin. There is another piece of fiction, a slew of articles and some poetry. All in all, a well balanced zine that should improve rapidly.

Rating 4:

* * *

CANFAN: 15c; quarterly; William D. Grant, 11 Burton Road, Toronto 10, Ont., Canada. Now in its twelfth year of publication, *Canfan* has been one of the better buys among fanzines for a long time. This issue is somewhat below par for the course; it's a good issue if judged against the average run of the mails, fanzine, but not so good

if stacked up against *Canfans* of the past.

Dean Grennell, in "Past and Present," looks over the fantasy field of today and yesterday. His is an extremely well written article, as you'd expect from Grennell, whose work resembles that of the erudite holdovers from long ago fandoms more than it does that of the present and often slapdash age.

Roberta Carr's "Strange but True" is strange all right.

Don Ford discusses the Convention Rotation system. (As set up, the annual World Science Fiction Convention rotates among three belts: eastern, middle western, and western.)

But most interesting of all is a reprint of George O. Smith's article, "Interplanetary Barriers," which deals with the power needed for interplanetary communication. The article is copyrighted in 1948; but it seems pertinent right now, no matter what changes have taken place since. Anyway, according to George O. it would take only 16 watts of power to communicate with the earth from the vicinity of the moon; about 6,000 watts from Mars and about 40,000 watts from Jupiter. Plus a lot of general data on the behavior of radio waves and the advantages of being able to use a narrow band.

Rating: 4

* * *

TACITUM: 10c; Benny Sodek, 1415 S. Marsalis, Dallas 16, Texas. "Tacitum, the Silent One," is Sodek's and Randy Brown's first issue. It's mimeoed, legible, and contains some pretty good material.

Noah W. McLeod, in "Lalithae and the Wogglebugs," examines

Phil Farmer's work. Randy Brown conducts the now almost inevitable fanzine fanzine review, and Ralph Hickok makes a better than average (fanzine-wise) gimmick story out of a flying saucer-type plot.

But the best thing in the issue comes at the end, in Sodek's and Jerry Kagay's "We Want You at VooDoo U," an advertisement for the school and an instruction manual for prospective students. Also listed is the curriculum, from Hexes I to Influencing Friends and Making People.

A thin zine, whose format and art can stand improving, but definitely promising.

Rating: 6

* * *

SATELLITE: quarterly; Don Allen, 3, Arkle St., Gateshead 8, Co. Durham, England. If you're in England you can get this one for one shilling an issue; if you're in the USA you can obtain two issues for a new prozine.

A good portion of this one seems to be given over to the tumult and the shouting between an anonymous columnist calling himself "Vitriol" and the objects of his vitriolic scorn. I seem to have missed an installment or so in this feud, so I find some of the charges and countercharges a bit confusing. However, if you're in a battling mood you might like to get involved here.

Peter Hamilton writes on "American Reprints," and the effect of the British edition American s-f magazine on the British market. Then there's Tom White's "Pun My Word," a sort of punning commentary on how not to explain science fictional humor.

Rating: 4

* * *

PERSPECTIVE: 10c; Harvey Segal; 2105 Walton Ave., New York 53, N. Y. This is a first issue, mimeoed, which proclaims itself an "An Amateur Literary Science Fiction Publication." It's a zine devoted, for a change, to science fiction—especially to the field of s-f books and their markets.

In this issue there's an article condemning the Science Fiction Book Club. The blast is anonymous, however. The writer seems mainly opposed to the markdowns in price that book club members get, and he claims that it is difficult for book dealers to meet the competition. Editor Segal invites a rebuttal from anyone interested in giving one.

There's also a list of the S-F paperbacks published in 1954.

Unfortunately, the mimeoing of this first issue isn't good. A lot of the pages are faint enough so that, though they're legible they're barely so.

Rating: 7

* * *

TYPO: 20c; bimonthly; 306 E. Hickory, Enid, Oklahoma. Co-edited by Kent Corey and Lynn Hickman. All they need is color for the cover—for the bem and the girl, that is.

There's Don Ford's "Handy Form for Final Farewell to Fandom," a check sheet on which you mark the reasons for quitting that suit your case. There's a TV review column by Eldon K. Everett, and Kent Corey's fanzine review column. Also a story by William Clyde.

The mimeoing is clear but the

format is pretty cluttered. Mainly, though, the zine is much too slim for its price. At a cent a page it would have to be sensational—and it's definitely not.

Rating: 8

* * *

MERLIN: 5c; monthly; Lee Anne Tremper, 1022 N. Tuxedo St., Indianapolis 1, Ind. This zine is considerably less meaty than earlier ones; it is given over largely to letter sections and to extensive review sections, both of fan work and of domestic and foreign science fiction.

Dave Jenrette gives a light-hearted history of what he calls space flight—but really covers all men's flying—in "For the Birds." Missed a few early birds, though. Crackel's "The Book Shelf" is about the best of the reviews.

Rating: 4

* * *

FANTASY-TIMES: 10; published twice a month, P.O. Box 2331, Paterson 23, New Jersey. James Taurasi and Ray Van Houten are the editors and publishers of this zine, long known as "The Newspaper of Science Fiction." Unfortunately, F-T no longer seems able to hold on to its twice a month, right on the dot schedule. A few months ago it started running behind; you'd get last month's issues instead of this month's. Then it caught up and seemed its old self again. Now it's running behind once more, and even more behind.

It's still the same zine; it still brings you the news of interest to the science fiction world. But sometimes the news seems a little back dated. If the zine can't be

brought up to date, why not skip a few issues, or publish less frequently? If it's run as a newspaper, the editors have to realize one thing: who wants to read last month's news?

Rating: 5

* * *

OPERATION FANTAST: Captain K. F. Slater, 22 Broad St., Syston, Leics., England. Subscription rates only are quoted: 4/for \$1.00 or 4 for 7/6. I don't know if single copies are on sale or not.

For a long time OF has maintained a widely varied selection of services for its members; subscription to the printed fanzine was only one of them. There were also science fiction lending libraries, manuscript bureaus, correspondence clubs, an art club, and more. Now it's hard to tell what is left. The trading bureau, for example, is apparently separated from OF now and being run commercially . . . Services remaining seem open to nonmembers (nonsubscribers) and a lot of projects have been dropped, more's the pity.

The OF zine itself is small, though very good looking and professionally printed; it contains a lot less material than did earlier issues. L. Major Reynolds has an article, "Humor in Science Fiction," and Barrington J. Bayley has a story "Cold Death." Also book and movie reviews.

I hope this group picks up in activity again.

Rating: 6

* * *

SCINTILLATION: 10c; Mark Schulzinger, 6791 Meadow Ridge Ln., Amberley Village, Ohio. A

rather slender mimeoed zine, with a very good article by Lou Tabakow called "A Plague on Your House."

In this, Lou describes some various types of fans you might be unlucky enough to meet. It's a scream; and rather exaggerated; they don't really act like that—or do they? Like every group, fandom has its, shall we say, less restrained elements . . .

Book reviews and a column by

Ray Schaffer round out the issue.

Rating: 7

* * *

That seems to be all the zines in the BOX this time. Remember, if you have a fanzine you wish reviewed, send it to me, Mari Wolf *Fandora's Box*, IMAGINATION, P. O. Box 230, Evanston, Ill. See you next issue . . .

—Mari Wolf

* * *

STATEMENT REQUIRED BY THE ACT OF AUGUST 24, 1912, AS AMENDED BY THE ACTS OF MARCH 3, 1933, AND JULY 2, 1946 (Title 39, United States Code, Section 233) SHOWING THE OWNERSHIP, MANAGEMENT, AND CIRCULATION OF IMAGINATION, published bi-monthly at Evanston, Illinois for February 1956

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WILLIAM L. HAMLING, Editor

Sworn to and subscribed before me this 20th day of September, 1955.

(SEAL)

S. J. PELZ.

(My commission expires Feb. 25, 1956)

Meeting At The Summit

by

Ivar Jorgensen

Some readers will accuse us of injecting politics into the magazine with this story; we submit the idea transcends party preferences!

IT was quite late when the Press Secretary asked for an audience.

He was one of the very few who made direct contact—a trusted friend of the President as well as an able buffer between the chief executive and the fourth estate.

The President said, "Why certainly—if it's that important. Come right up."

As the line went dead, the President put down the phone and picked up the western story anthology he had been reading. He thumbed the pages pensively, then laid that down too and sat back in his chair. He closed his eyes.

So darn seldom he got a chance to read anymore; or to do anything else for that matter except play a little golf once in a while and spend the rest of the time trying to stem the world's mad dash to destruction.

He smiled gently, his tired eyes still closed. He estimated it would take the Press Secretary a good ten minutes to get to the White House. Good, The President had come to a point where he savored every precious moment of solitude.

He left his mind drift—first to the state of the world. It wasn't so bad, really. Not in comparison. After all, a cold war was better than a hot one. And even the cold war was softening up a little. Enough to—the President's smile deepened.

Enough to quit.

That was his big secret. He hadn't told them yet. In deference to political strategy, responsibility to the party, and that sort of thing, he'd held his peace. But his decision had been made. He would not run again. A man, he told himself, is entitled to a few blessed years as his own



master; a time when he ceases to be a slave of duty. Why just think! To grab the clubs and shoot eighteen without having to make "arrangements!" To go out and catch a couple of fish without the Secret Service plotting the course, calling the tune, following, grim-faced in his wake.

The President's smile deepened. It was all so darned crazy! You go out to get a little relaxation—to catch a fish. But before you arrive the stream has to be stocked so thick you can almost walk on the beauties because if the President failed to catch a trout in one of their mountain streams, the state involved gets a black eye and

might lose a few thousand tourists that year. He wondered idly if they gave the fish a pep talk when they tossed them in.

But that sort of thing would be finished, soon. He was going to quit. He was going to tell them—"Mr. President."

He jerked erect, blinked, and gave the Press Secretary his famous smile—half-apologetic now. "Sorry. I was napping I guess. Didn't hear you. Sit down—sit down."

The Press Secretary did as instructed and the President was struck by the tight, stricken look on his gray face. "Good Lord, Jim! What happened? You look as

though somebody just dropped a bomb on New York City." He could afford to speak lightly because he knew any news of grave import would not come through the Press Secretary.

The latter appeared to have difficulty with his reply. With the President's eye upon him—sharp but friendly—he floundered for a moment, then said, "I might as well give it to you straight, Mr. President. Then we can go on from there."

"An excellent idea."

"All right—here goes. A man contacted me and requests that you come to the top of Mount Rainer for a conference."

The President couldn't find any words. The silence was heavy.

"And I think you'd better go," the Press Secretary finished in a voice charged with sheer misery. He sat mute, wondering what was going on through The President's mind.

Finally the chief executive said, "Jim—I—really—"

The Press Secretary leaned forward, his whole being tense. "Mr. President. Please answer one question—honestly. Do you think I've lost my mind? Do you think I've suddenly gone crazy?"

THE reply was in a quiet tone.

"No, Jim—I don't. I know

you too well for that. I think you're saying something you have to say—doing a job you feel you have to do—even if it puts you in a position where you have to ask a question like that."

"Thank you."

"And now—why don't you just sit back and explain it? I'll be frank. It makes no sense to me. But I'm listening."

A warm feeling swept the Press Secretary. This president we had. This solid rock of a guy. You just couldn't beat him!

The homely, earnest ex-journalist leaned forward again. "The success of this mission, Mr. President—my visit here—hinges upon whether or not you believe I'm telling the truth. I'm going to tell you some strange things. And if you doubt my word—" he shrugged, "well—I will have just wasted your time."

"Go ahead with it, Jim." The words were almost sharp now.

"All right, sir." He took a deep breath and plunged in. "I've just had a briefing such as no man on this globe ever went through. I've been to the top of Mount Ranier."

"When?"

"Tonight."

"Go on."

"I'll tell you step-by-step exactly what happened—or what

seemed to happen. Then you can make your decision."

The Press Secretary began to talk. He talked for a long time. The President listened, his face a mask giving no clue whatever to his inner thoughts. This was a trick he learned over conference tables through the years. His skill at this would have made him a great poker-player but he never cared for the game.

When the Press Secretary stopped talking, he sat looking at the President with question marks in his eyes. He had no idea what the latter would say or do. The possible extremes were in his mind. The President might smile and say, "You've done a good job, Jim." Or he might reach for the phone and say, "Please send in two strong men and a straight jacket."

The President did neither. He spoke very quietly. "I think I'd better go to Mount Ranier. Tell them I'm ready."

The Press Secretary picked up the phone, dialed a number. When the party at the other end answered, he said, "The President agrees. He awaits your contact."

He put down the phone and they sat looking at each other, waiting. There was nothing else to do, now. The President's eyes were vague as though he were

looking through space and time. He said, "We've come a long way in a very short time, Jim. It's worth pondering."

"A long way, Mr. President."

"In a scant fifty years, we've gone practically straight up in matters of science, invention—" The thought broke off as his mind went to some of the things his Press Secretary had told him. And regardless of the gravity of this situation, he found himself looking forward to seeing them for himself.

He had not long to wait. A moment later an odd red haze appeared in a far corner of the room. There was a crackling sound as of high-voltage electricity jumping its bounds. The phenomenon vanished as quickly as it had appeared and a young man was approaching the President's chair.

So far as the President could see, he might have been one of the bright young career men who hurried about Washington these days; except that the eternal briefcase was missing and the young man wore a one-piece coverall type of garment in pastel red. He was blonde, pleasant, and had even, white teeth. He was also respectful.

He bowed and said, "Mr. President, I have been sent to con-

duct you and your assistant, to the rendezvous."

The President glanced quickly at the Press Secretary, then said, "Of course."

"If you will be so kind as to move with me to the far corner of the room."

The Press Secretary's expression said, *It's all right. This is just how it happened to me*, and they followed the young man across the thick carpeting.

In the corner, he arranged them precisely. "If you will stand just there—" Then he stepped between them and looked pleasantly unconcerned.

The President tensed himself for what was to come. But nothing came except the crackling and the red light; the dissolving of the walls and the young man saying, "You may sit down now if you wish."

No physical discomfort whatever.

THE President sat down and looked about. He was in a small, well-furnished room, pastelled in a light shade of green complimenting the young man's uniform, and he got the flash of an idea that color was very important in the scheme of whatever science brought this transposition about.

There was a soft whirring sound. The President said, "May I ask

where we are?"

"Certainly, sir. We are in a small ship. We are crossing your country at around one hundred thousand of your feet."

"At what speed?"

This gave the young man pause. "It would be very hard to translate into terms with which you are familiar. I would say roughly the speed of light. The major time-lapse is consumed in ascent and descent."

The President showed great interest. "Tell me this—we were moved from my study through some scientific process I won't ask you to explain, but why weren't we carried the entire distance to Ranier in that manner?"

The young man pondered. "That is of course difficult for you to understand. And quite difficult for me to explain so allow me to put it this way. When planning a trip from Washington to New York, you walk from your office to your car, and ride in the car from your residence to the airport."

"I see—a matter of slower speeds over short distances."

"In a way, but more so a matter of practicality. You could hardly bring the car into your office nor the aircraft onto your front lawn."

The President let it rest there. He said, "One more thing—why was I not contacted directly in this matter?"

This embarrassed the young man. "Wherever we go, sir, we attempt to conform to customs and manner existing in that place. We understood that to reach The President of the United States, one always proceeds through channels."

The President smiled. The humming sound ceased. The young man arose, forestalling further questions.

"This way, if you will be so kind."

The President and the Press Secretary followed the young man from the room into a low corridor. The walls of this passage were transparent and the President caught his breath at the grandeur outside. He got the impression they were moving from the small ship to a larger one perched precariously on the edge of an abyss. Below, under bright moonlight, lay the snow-covered approaches to Ranier and her sister peaks. A view of overpowering majesty such as few men had ever seen. One of the reasons, the President thought, why some men join the air force.

They entered another room, this one with a blue motif, through another door that opened automatically on approach, and into one of pastel green.

This room was somewhat larger but no more ornate nor less efficiently furnished than the others. A streamlined, oval desk sat in its

center from the far side of which a man arose and held forth his hand.

He was slim as a reed and had snow-white hair. He gave the impression of ripe years yet with no physical indications of this other than a head of beautiful snow-white hair. Perhaps, the President thought, this indication was an illusion. And perhaps the aura of power emanating from the man was also an illusion but the President would not have been willing to bet on it.

The man's smile was an odd mixture of friendliness and impersonality as they shook hands. He said, "My name is Rex, Mr. President. The fact that in one of your languages the word means *king* is purely coincidental. I am not a monarch in any sense. My title is Director of the Seventh Sector."

As Rex had got to his feet, the chair under him had swung under the desk out of his way. Now it moved back to its original position. And as the President took the seat Rex indicated beside the desk, he had a whimsical thought: *I wonder how that chair knew he was ready to sit down again?*

REX nodded to the young man in the pastel-red uniform. The latter bowed slightly, turned and left the room. Rex turned his dark eyes—almost feminine in their beauty—on the President. His quick

smile was even more impersonal now. "Shall we get to the business at hand, or could you do with a little refreshment first?"

"I'd prefer the former," The President said briefly.

"Good. I imagine your aide told you some of it, but I'd better recap that and then go on."

Rex nodded briefly in The Press Secretary's direction. It was the silver-haired man's first acknowledgement of his presence.

"You are probably curious as to who I am and just what the Seventh Sector is. I'll tell you. The Seventh Sector is a team denoting a certain part of the known universe. It contains approximately nine-hundred thousand solids of a twenty-million-ton weight or over. Eleven of these solids supports animate life at around the evolutionary stage of your own—or higher. Do you follow me?"

When The President was slow in answering, Rex said "I suggest you lay aside any mental resistance and take all statements I make as fact."

"Why should I do that?"

"Because my deceiving you would be pointless and because I must transfer a great deal of information to your mind in a very short time."

The President said nothing and Rex went on. "As Director of this sector, it is my job to check the de-

velopment on its various planets and make progress reports to the Council."

"And this Council is located—?"

"Many light years from here—at the hub of the known universe, but that is not important."

"I though perhaps we—or our representatives might someday—"

"Appear before it? I'm afraid not. I fear you are treading the path of those who once inhabited your neighbor planet, Mars."

"Then life does exist—or did—on Mars?"

"Oh yes, but we were forced to eliminate it."

The President spoke calmly. "Then you are able to depopulate whole planets?"

"Whole systems if necessary. Let me explain. When conditions are right, life inevitably comes into existence upon a planet. The entities involved are always pretty much as you and I, physically, because conditions produce a ruling race of our structure or do not produce life at all.

"The problem, Mr. President, lies in the spiritual. Every race on every inhabited planet is given the intelligence and desire to evolve upward spiritually but they do not always succeed. A time limit is set on this so that the inhabitants of each planet arrive finally at an evolutionary crisis."

The President thought of nuclear fission, the atom bomb, mankind's incredible progress over the last two hundred years. "And you have come to aid us in spiritual development?"

"On the contrary. You have had all the guidance necessary—far more than those on most planets—more than did your neighbors on Mars. I have come to annihilate you."

The President hid his shock well. "If killing me will—"

"Annihilate life on the planet. You see, Mr. President, there comes a time when each inhabited planet must join the Council—when it reaches a point at which its existence affects the great family of planets. If at that time, its state of affairs and development are negative, its population is eradicated for the greater good."

"May I ask two questions?" The President said.

"You may."

"Thank you. First, why do you contact only me with this news? I am the titular head of only one nation on this planet. There are many others."

"I would rather reserve the answer to that question."

"Very well, the second. How can we affect a family of inhabited planets the existence of which we are not even aware. Planets with

which we have no contact whatever?"

"In a few short years you would know of their existence—you would not only be able to contact them—you would visit them and they would visit you."

"And just how would we affect them adversely?"

"That should be apparent. Your present state of dwarfed spirituality is made clear by your background of violence and injustice. I refer to your planet rather than to your nation. Practically all your scientific progress has come as a result of war. Nations that lose a war on your planet study and invent and discover like demons possessed for tools with which to win the next one. Do you deny that at this moment your planet is little more than an armed camp?"

"No," The President said sadly. "I cannot deny this."

"Then you realize why we cannot let you move out into space, carrying with you the greed, the envy, the hatred, the violence that stalks the corridors of your history."

THERE was no doubt in the President's mind that this remarkable man could back up his every word. His statements were not idle threats. The President said, "But your accusations are not entirely just. You make no mention of

our great progress toward spiritual goals in the past hundred years—even the past fifty have seen marked changes in that direction.”

“I have noted that. It is what caused me to make this contact with you. Ordinarily, no such contact would have been made. I would have checked the planet, reported it to the Council, and annihilation would have been automatic.”

“Then there is hope for us?”

A look of skepticism was mirrored in Rex’s eyes. “A slim one, perhaps—a very slim one.” He leaned suddenly forward. “You asked me why I contacted you only. Because, of all the nations on this planet, yours is the most powerful—the first powerful nation in the history of your planet that has fought no wars of aggression—that has subjugated no weaker nations. Certainly a hopeful overall sign.”

“And greater progress will be made in the future. Progress comes slowly. We must have time.”

“But progress has been too slow. There is little time left.”

“Could you be more specific?”

“In rare cases, where planets have been found to be approaching a crest so to speak, extensions have been granted.”

“And you will grant us an extension?”

“I’m not sure. There is nothing,

at the moment, that justifies one.” Rex pondered. “Yet there are strong indications—”

The President waited. Rex gave his decision. “I will withhold judgment for five years. At the end of that time, I will contact you again. My judgment will then rest on what progress you have made in the interim.”

“But I am only one man!”

“A powerful man. And I am very much afraid the fate of the planet lies with you and your nation.”

The President arose from his chair. Rex did likewise. The President said, “I will go personally to the United Nations—all together the heads of all the nations—”

Rex shook his head. “I’m sorry. I can allow no such deviation from the channel of your present efforts. Telling your world of this meeting would put it in the nature of a threat. Thus, any results achieved would come through fear of punishment and would not be permanent.”

“There is one more point. Mine is an elective office. I may not be in the President’s chair five years from now.”

Rex considered gravely. “I see. In that case, one of two things will happen, depending upon the man in your present office and the sincerity of his efforts.”

“And they are—?”

“Perhaps we will contact him and

give him our decision."

"Or—?"

Rex shrugged. "Perhaps we won't bother." He held out his hand. "Goodbye, Mr. President, and good luck . . ."

THE President of the United States sat alone in his study. His face seemed wearier than usual. There was a sag in his shoulders that would have drawn comment in public. He was considering his future—the future of the world.

There were of course many good men in both parties. In the privacy of his own thoughts, it was hard to judge which party had really done the nation greater service. At one time, he himself had debated running for the Presidency on the

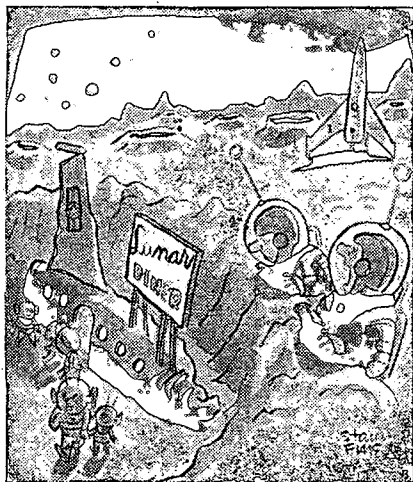
other ticket. The country would be in good hands regardless.

Ordinarily.

But now it came down to the man rather than the party. Would he be able to convince an incoming president of what had occurred on Mount Ranier? Make him truly understand how little time remained? Would his predecessor have been able to convince him?

No. Of course not. Only he, The President of the United States, knew of the peril ahead. He pressed a button on his desk. The Press Secretary entered. The President straightened his shoulders. "When the right moment comes," he said, "tell them I will run again."

And God grant I win, he added in his heart.



"So that's what became of the experimental rocket we shot up here years ago!"

THE COSMIC SNARE

by

Milton Lesser

Sub-space was a vast nothingness used for instantaneous travel between stellar worlds. It was uncharted, and — Liddell knew — a death trap!

LIDDELL stared expectantly at the blank screen of the transfer unit. It had been blank ever since he had arrived with his wife at the doorway, enigmatically, mysteriously, sometimes frighteningly blank.

"See anything?" Linda asked. Liddell's wife of one month was a tall but trimly built girl in the uniform of the Transfer Service. She leaned anxiously over Liddell's shoulder now as he peered at the dazzling white screen.

"Not yet," he said, licking his lips. "It was just a hunch, anyway."

"What was just a hunch, darling?"

"That we'd see anything now."

"But you said—"

"I know what I said, Linda. That we'd had enough time to get used to this transfer station. That we'd read all the instructions and advice left by our predecessor. That we'd —"

"Then where's our first customer?" Linda demanded with a pout.

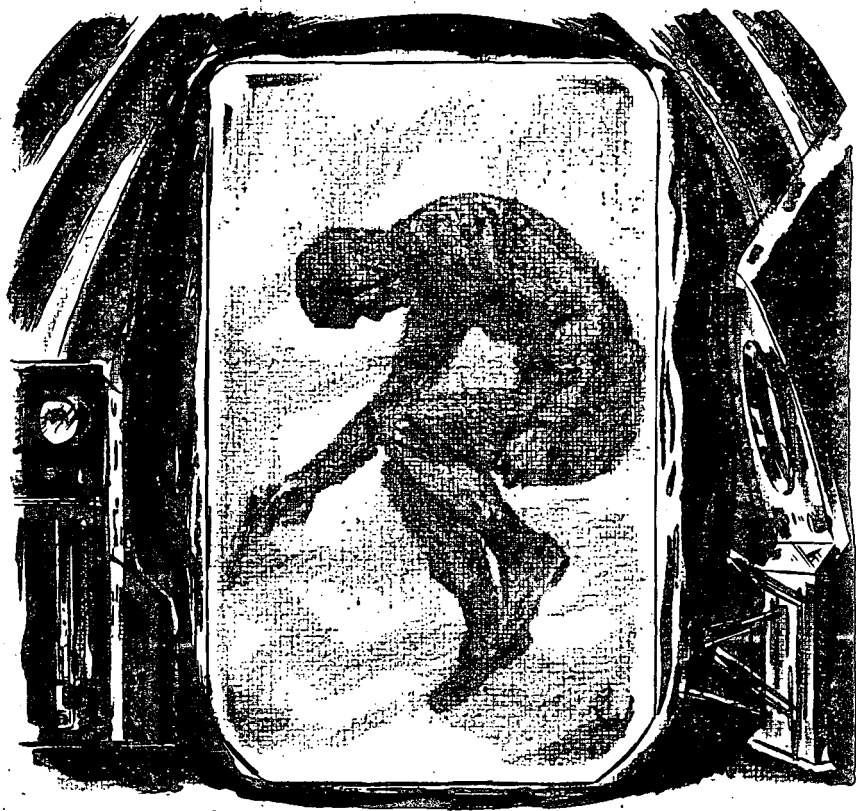
Liddell grinned and craned his neck to peck a kiss at his young wife's cheek. "Don't tell me you're lonely already!" he gasped, feigning amazement.

"No, but —"

Suddenly, the lines of Liddell's gaunt face went serious. "The lighthouse keepers of last century had nothing on us," he said.

Linda nodded. "They were practically in the middle of things by comparison. That's one thing I can't exactly get straight, sweetheart. Exactly where we are, I mean."

Liddell shrugged and offered an expansive gesture which was meant to take in the round globe of their living quarters and the transfer unit. "We're nowhere," he said. "Or we're everywhere. It depends on what sub-space school you be-



long to. You see, sub-space is either utterly nowhere, existing *below* the normal endless but finite, self-contained space-time continuity or else it is potentially everywhere, existing just below the warp and woof of space-time on a thousand thousand worlds”

“Never mind, Lidd,” Linda grinned. “Once you get started on

something like that, you’d keep a gal up all night.”

“Sleepy?”

“A little. That is, as you would say, if there was such a thing as night here. But there’s nothing outside the globe, nothing but that featureless grayness. It doesn’t even swirl. If it just swirled a little, like smoke, that would be some-

thing. But it doesn't even do that."

"Sub-space," Liddell offered. "Absolute nothingness. It's funny, you always picture nothingness as being black. But it's not: It's gray. Plain, featureless, changeless gray."

"Brother!" Linda said. "Can I ever see why they only take husband-wife teams in the Transfer Service."

"I'll bite. Why?"

"Because a man alone could go off his rocker thinking the things you think. He needs a girl around."

"Does he?" Liddell asked, then waited until Linda had begun to pout before he whirled around and took her in his arms, his back to the blank transfer screen.

"Lidd," Linda said. "Ah, Lidd . . ." But all at once she stiffened in his arms. He could feel her hands against his chest, trying to thrust him away. Her mouth was open but she couldn't speak. With one hand she managed to point.

At the surface of the transfer screen.

"We're going to have company," Linda finally said.

LINDA was in the galley, whipping up a quick meal. Aside from its complete necessity in making the switch-over from normal space to sub-space and back again, that was one of the functions of the transfer unit. Since many of

the outworld colonies still depended entirely on food concentrates and vitashots, a final home-cooked meal would be much appreciated by the traveler through sub-space.

"Scared?" Liddell called over his shoulder.

"You mean that they won't like my food?"

"No, I mean with our first customer?"

"I'm too busy with southern fried chicken to be scared."

"Funny, isn't it?" Liddell mused. "Fifty years ago if you asked a science writer to whip you up a piece about sub-space what would he have said?"

"Oh, something about a silver-hulled space liner shimmering into normal space."

Liddell nodded. "Well, they had the shimmering part right, anyway. But it wouldn't have been a space ship."

"It wouldn't have been a space ship," Linda agreed.

"Because there's no necessity to breathe or to carry out any of the normal biological functions in sub-space. There isn't any heat in sub-space and there isn't any cold. There is only nothingness and nothingness can have absolutely no effect on an organism. In short —"

"In short my friend chicken is going to burn if I keep listening to you."

"— no spaceships. Just people. Shimmering in and out and spanning the chasm of light years instantly."

"Have you any data on our visitors yet?"

"Not visitors. Just one. One traveler."

"What does the screen say, Lidd?"

Liddell read what was there before him for the third time. "Single man. Luna outbound."

"Destination?"

"It doesn't say. Weight, one ninety. The —"

"But we don't collect his fare, so why the business about his weight?"

"Didn't you read the instructions, hon? Because it's forwarded from here, just like we'll forward Mister Smith to his destination."

"Smith? That's his name?"

"John Smith," Liddell said.

"I don't believe it. I never thought there actually was anybody named John Smith anywhere, anytime."

"We," said Liddell, "have a John Smith."

"*Darn* this deep well cooker! It isn't hot enough yet to put a good crust on —"

"A fine time to talk about cooking," Liddell shouted, hoping his voice would carry back into the galley over the click-clacking rac-

ket of the sub-space communicator. "Hey here's more from the Luna outbound station," he added as the transfer screen pulsed and flashed again.

"Such as what?"

"It's still blurry. Here it comes now."

"Well?"

"Hey, what the hell is this!" Liddell cried abruptly.

"Such language."

"It's still blurry. It's flashing on and off, red on and then off to white blank, red on again and off to white blank."

"While you were studying the manuals, need I remind you I was trying to learn how to cook for an interstellar clientele? What does the flashing red signal mean?"

"It means danger," Liddell said. "It means something's wrong and Luna out doesn't have time to tell us what. I don't want to scare you, but better drop your pots and pans and truck something up from the arsenal. I've got to stay by the screen."

There was a clatter as Linda called, "He doesn't want to scare me, the man says. What is it, creatures from outer space or something?"

"Very funny," Liddell said in a voice which clearly indicated he did not think it was particularly funny at all.

THERE was nothing on the screen now but the flashing red and white signal. The complete fragility of their position struck Liddell all at once. The transfer station was a steelite globe a sixteenth of a mile in diameter. It contained the sub-space transfer machinery, complete living quarters for Liddell and his wife and the private and public rooms of a small-sized hotel, as well as repair machinery, an arsenal and a library of the ten thousand six hundred and seventeen possible destinations for an outbound sub-space travelers.

If there was trouble, Liddell thought, any kind of serious trouble — he and Linda could do almost nothing about it. And if ever — for some reason the nightmare thought came to him unbidden — if ever they were set adrift from the transfer station, adrift in the featureless less-than vacuum of sub-space, as had happened once or twice before in the brief history of the service, they would float in a changeless insanity-ridden void forever, their bodily functions suspended indefinitely, only their minds working, fighting the sheer horror of nothingness . . .

"Here's the gun," Linda said. "Did you know you were covered with sweat, Lidd?"

"I was just thinking." He took the blaster and stuck it awkwardly

in his belt. He felt suddenly foolish. The trouble could have been any number of things; it didn't necessarily mean gun trouble. He was on the point of removing the big clumsy weapon from his belt when the screen flashed again.

"He's coming now," Linda said.

He was coming, all right. The screen flashed green for arrival. It was seven feet high and three feet across, that screen, and whoever materialized at the station would materialize in the screen itself.

"What about the danger signal?" Linda asked.

"They always follow it up with a verbal message," Liddell explained. "It usually only takes a few minutes. It —"

"Here he comes!" Linda cried.

Something was shimmering in the screen, pulsing, struggling to bridge the yawning chasm between the space which was not and the universe which was. It gradually took the shape of a man floating in an unexpectedly fetus-like position.

"Lidd," Linda said. "We're getting over the sub-typer."

"A message?" Liddell asked only a small part of his mind concentrating on what Linda had said. The rest of his being was riveted on the transfer screen as the figure there floated closer, still shadowy, but the shadow darkening, solidifying, bridging . . .

"I'll read it to you as it comes.
URGENT LUNA OUTWARD TO
SUB-SPACE WAY STATION.
JOHN SMITH that's strange.
It's stopping."

"It has to stop. Subspace can
take only a certain number of ver-
bal units at a time. Give it a couple
of seconds."

"How's our John Smith?"

"Still shimmering, but getting
more solid all the time."

"Here it comes again IS
ESCAPED LUNA PRISON
CONDEMNED KILLER JASON
SHORT Oh God, Lidd!"

There wasn't a station or bud-
ding colony in the galaxy which
hadn't heard of Jason Short. His
kind was a rarity in the twenty-
first century, the strangely mal-ad-
justed, warped, sneering, consci-
enceless professional killer. Before
his capture, Short had hired out to
governments, to private firms, to
individuals if they had sufficient
capital — as a killer. On capture
he had been condemned to death
at the luna penal colony but the
sentence had been delayed and post-
poned for several years — all the
while Jason Short's notoriety grow-
ing — because sociologists and psy-
chologists had insisted on studying
Short exhaustively to see if they
could prevent a recurrence of his
mental sickness.

And now all this, Liddell thought

numbingly, had backfired. Now Ja-
son Short had somehow managed to
escape —

Was materializing here, a cold,
ruthless killer:

Liddell clawed at the blaster at
his belt and brought it up and clear
at the precise moment that Jason
Short materialized fully in the
screen.

There was time for one wild
shot, the raw energy searing into
sub-space through the screen. Then
Jason Short became a solid, bulky
but swift-moving figure. He lunged
at Liddell and they grappled for
possession of the blaster. Linda
screamed, but she might have been
a hundred parsecs away in sub-
space. For all his enormous size and
heavily-muscled body, Jason Short
moved with surprising swiftness.
He used his right forearm like a
club, smashing it against Liddell's
jaw, stunning him. Liddell went
down and Short came down on top
of him and the two of them rolled
over and over away from the screen,
their wildly thrashing arms and
legs bringing Linda down on top of
them.

All at once, Short rolled clear of
Liddell. Struggling for breath, Lid-
dell climbed to his feet, bringing
the blaster to bear on the killer tri-
umphantly.

"Hold it!" Short cried.

"Oh, Lidd, Lidd do what

you have to do!" Linda said.

But Liddell let the blaster fall to the floor.

For standing in front of him, waiting insolently, Jason Short had circled his arm about Linda's neck and was holding her in front of him as a shield. In his free hand, Short held a knife, the point barely touching the edge of Linda's ribcage.

"Why," said Short in a pleasant voice, "don't we talk about where you're going to send me?"

LATER Jason Short said, "I see they flashed a danger signal from Luna out. How do I know you won't do the same?" Short was a big man with immense shoulders and heavy limbs but the fluid, graceful movements of the born athlete. Only his eyes, in an otherwise pleasant face, looked brutal. Liddell had never seen a killer's eyes before, but did not have to be told that Short's were killer's eyes.

"You don't," Liddell said. "You don't know at all."

"O. K. pal. Have it your way. I guess I made a mistake at Luna out. I guess I should have killed them. Do you think it matters to me? Do you think it could possibly matter how many I kill now?"

Liddell said nothing. Short licked his lips and studied Liddell's

blaster, which he had retrieved while still holding Linda as a shield.

"Are you going to kill us?" Linda said.

"Lady, I'm not even thinking about it."

"You're not—"

"Yet. The important thing is — where am I going? Is there some way I can go off from here without you knowing where? Or without these machines of yours recording it?"

"The machines record nothing," Liddell said. "It's all up to us."

"Then all I have to do is kill you, and there'll be no way for them to trace me? Is that what you're saying, you sap?"

"That's what I'm saying," Liddell admitted. Linda gave him a startled look but said nothing.

"They must be a catch to it somewhere," Short protested. He almost sounded indignant.

"There's a catch," Liddell said. "Give."

"These stations. It's why they're manned. Don't you think the whole job could be done mechanically?"

"Yes, but —"

"But it's not, Mr. Short. Because there are too many variables. Because sub-space is still unpredictable and the thinking machine has not yet been built which can handle more than a few unpredictables."

"What are you getting at?"

"Just this, Mr. Short. You can kill us if you want to. You can choose your destination, wait while I plot it out on the de-materializer and possibly verify it for yourself if you know anything about sub-space."

"I don't know anything at all about sub-space," Short admitted.

"But," Liddell went on, "you'd be gambling and gambling badly with the unpredictability factor. One sub-space transfer out of two, according to statistics, is not routine. Oh, not essentially dangerous as long as there's someone at the transfer unit station to correct any inconsistencies in transfer as they arise. But if there's no one, you'll float in sub-space forever, not going hungry, not going thirsty, not growing older, but slowly going crazy with changelessness"

"So, I can't kill you."

"Suit yourself."

"We'll get to that later," Short said. "Now, about where I can go: you got any ideas?"

"There are ten thousand and some worlds connected by these sub-space units, Mr. Short. What type of world did you have in mind?"

"Not a new one or a small one. I'd stick out like a sore thumb. I want one plenty far from Earth but still not a brand new, uncrowded

colony. I want a far colony but an established one."

"Deneb Twelve," Liddell said in a very businesslike voice. "You couldn't possibly do better than Deneb Twelve. At the last census it had a population of over a hundred million, but it's more than six hundred light years from Earth, the twelfth planet of a system in which seven, nine, ten, eleven, twelve and fourteen are inhabited or habitable"

"All right, all right. Cut all the details. How do I know you're telling the truth about Deneb Twelve?"

"You don't but you can always check it in our library."

"If you say I can check it, then I don't have to. I believe you. But unfortunately, I know nothing about sub-space."

Liddell shrugged.

"But you're not going to trick me," Short said.

"I didn't say I would."

"I'm saying *I know* you're not."

Again Liddell shrugged.

"You want to know why?"

"I'm listening," Liddell said.

"Because I'm going to take your wife with me, that's why. When we land on Deneb Twelve, I'll let her go."

"You can't take her," Liddell said.

"Can't I? Want to get started now, Liddell?" Short asked, wav-

ing the blaster. "I'm ready to get started, if you are."

LIDDELL stared mutely at his wife. Linda's face was drawn and white and for several moments no one spoke. Then Linda said:

"You'd better do whatever he says, Lidd."

"You know something?" Short said, laughing. "You'd better."

Without a word, Liddell stalked toward the de-materializer.

"Sooner or later they're going to catch you, Short," Liddell said an hour later. "Why don't you give yourself up now and get it over with."

"Don't make me laugh. Would you give yourself up? I'm a condemned killer, pal. Sure, maybe they'll catch me on Deneb or someplace, but every day I stay alive is an extra day of reprieve for me, and don't think I don't know it. Now, are you ready with that dematerializer or whatever the hell you call it?"

Liddell nodded and Short said, "Then let's go."

Liddell sat at the plotting table without moving. For a moment he stared defiantly at Short, but the escaped killer got up and placed a hand impersonally on Linda's shoulder. He closed the fingers and Linda's face went chalk-white. He looked at Liddell, challenging him

with his eyes.

"Better do what he says, Lidd," Linda told her husband.

Liddell sat there and didn't answer. Linda turned to Short and said, "Let me talk to him for a minute."

Short shrugged and released her. She came over to Liddell and bent close to him and said, "Listen to me, darling. Do everything he says."

"He's not going to take you with him," Liddell said fiercely.

"You've plotted his sub-space pattern. He could take a chance and kill us both and try the transfer mechanism himself. You forget, he has absolutely nothing to lose."

"Don't you see the way he looked at you? He's not hiding it. He wants you, Linda. If we let him take you to Deneb Twelve, he can lose himself there. With you. It would take the law officers of a frontier world like Deneb Twelve months to find you. I can't let him do it."

"I'll be all right, believe me."

"Linda, listen to me. I know you're saying that because you don't want Short to do anything violent here — to both of us. But there's another way."

"I know. To refuse. To let him go alone — and probably kill us first."

"No," Liddell whispered while Short watched them from across the room, unable to hear the words

they spoke. "There is another way. Do you trust me, Linda?"

"You know you don't have to ask a question like that. I trust you, Lidd. I trust you with my life."

"Then listen. I'm going to send you. I don't want to say any more. I don't think he can hear us from where he's sitting but let's not chance it."

"But you said if he took me to Deneb —"

"I'll send you," said Liddell grimly, his voice fading until Linda could barely hear it. "But not to Deneb. Trust me, darling."

"I trust you."

"And we don't have to worry about law officers. I'll come for you."

"But where —"

"Hey, you two," Short yelled suddenly. "That's enough of that. I said I was ready to get started!" He crossed the room in half a dozen powerful strides and grasped Linda's arm. Liddell had time to kiss his wife briefly, quickly, then watched as she went to the transfer screen with Jason Short.

"You sure you won't try any tricks?" Short asked.

Instead of answering Liddell said, "Do you think I'm crazy? You have my wife, haven't you?"

Short laughed and said nothing. With Linda, he climbed the three steps up to the transfer screen. "I

still can't get used to the idea," he admitted. "We stand here, in this screen like this. You press a few buttons, and what happens? We go sailing off into sub-space and the next thing we know we're materializing on Deneb Twelve. It's like magic."

"It's coldly scientific," Liddell assured him. "Sub-space is as real as the normal space-time continuum, as extensive. As a matter of fact, they're co-extensive. They exist together, side by side, but the laws of finite speed, the laws which say you would need all the mass in the universe to travel at the speed of light do not apply in sub-space. Travel is incredibly fast, almost instantaneous between any two points — without the need of acceleration."

"I didn't ask for a lecture," Short said. "Just you send us where we want to go."

LINDA offered Liddell a wan smile. The smile said, better than any words: you're spouting science, the science you love, even at a time like this — and you know something! I love you for it, I love you all the more for it . . .

Now Short and Linda stood within the frame of the transfer screen. Wordless, Liddell took the data on weight and space-shift which he had plotted at the plotting table and brought it to the simple bank

of controls below the transfer screen. Automatically he began to plot in the course by punching half a dozen tabs on one side of the control board. He was aware of Short standing above him, within the frame of the screen, scowling, one hand on Linda's shoulder and one holding Liddell's own blaster — aware of the almost serene smile of trust on Linda's face.

It was better, Liddell knew all at once, far better that he hadn't had the time to tell her. For then her trust would have been shattered by fear

"Well, what are we waiting for?" Short wanted to know.

"I'm ready now," Liddell told him.

"Say so long to the old man," Short told Linda.

"I — I trust you, darling," Linda said. "I love you."

"Now you know," Short chortled. "There's a touching scene. But let's drop the curtain and get on with it!" he added with a broad grin. Short was enjoying himself. Liddell knew. Every moment he had was a moment of freedom he hadn't expected. He would be very dangerous as a consequence. Whatever he did, he knew he had nothing to lose. He had to be stopped.

And Liddell was the only one who could stop him.

Savagely, Liddell threw home the

controls. For a split second, nothing happened. Then, slowly, Linda and Jason Short began to shimmer. Watching them like that, it was eerie. Liddell knew the theory well enough, but this was the first actual transfer he had ever attempted. And Linda was part of it —

The two figures in the screen above him — the woman he loved and the man who had come abruptly to shatter their lives — became no more tenuous than smoke. They seemed to swirl and shift like smoke, to grow thinner, as if a wind had come following blowing. . .

Short's voice echoed strangely from the now almost shapeless fog in the transfer screen. "Deneb," his voice wailed, ghostlike. "Deneb, here we come!"

Then the screen was empty. Liddell released the controls and stared for a moment at the blank whiteness his head. He got up and went to the communications board, where he tapped a code message to central sub-space station. The message said:

This is Liddell at sub-space B-11. Received your message and your John Smith. Trouble. Station suspended until further notice. Send no one through as there will be no one to receive them.

The message sent, Liddell replotted the transfer unit, double-

checking his previous findings. He then set the controls on automatic and climbed the steps to the screen. He did not bother going to the arsenal for a weapon. Where he was going weapons would be useless, he thought. Where he was going, no man had ever gone before.

Well, two people had — but two only. And he had sent them.

He was going after Linda and Jason Short.

He took one more look at the mistake he had purposely plotted into the transfer pattern. The mistake which meant that Linda and her captor would never arrive on Deneb Twelve.

Or anywhere . . .

The mistake which left Jason Short and Liddell's wife stranded in sub-space, in the nothingness continuum somewhere between the normal space-time of station B-11 and Deneb Twelve.

It was, Liddell told himself for the tenth time, the only thing he could have done. Trap Short. Trap Linda with him, yes, but at least he could go after them. At least he knew exactly where they were. In sub-space. At the exact point he had plotted on the control board. Waiting. Waiting forever if somehow he missed them when he sent himself through. Waiting in timeless spaceless, airless temperature-less sub-space. Waiting. They would not

miss oxygen. All their bodily functions were suspended. Waiting — possibly to drift forever until their minds were shattered in the awful blank immensity.

A chill possessed Lindell as the automatic machinery suddenly made him shimmer. From his viewpoint within the screen, it looked as if the room and the controls and the screen were themselves shimmering.

He blinked. And opened his eyes.

And stared out on a featureless gray infinity.

On sub-space.

"Linda!" he called. He hadn't meant to shout. He knew there was no air, no medium to carry his voice.

But he heard it — loud, clear.

"Linda!" he shouted again. It was his own voice booming out across the gray void. It was not his imagination. Then was science somehow wrong about sub-space? He didn't think so. But it couldn't possibly be an audible projection of his voice. It had to be something else. Telepathy? It was something like that, he decided. An audible telepathy in a world which didn't obey the natural laws which governed our own universe.

"We're over here, Lidd!" Linda's voice came to him. It was followed at once by a scream and Short's

shout:

"Shut your trap if you know what's good for you."

Liddell swam. The motion came to him unbidden but he felt himself moving through the gray nothingness. He could see nothing except his own arms as he made the swimming motions and moved. Swimming through nothingness? But there was no medium to push against. Another physical law, a law of our universe, Liddell knew which went by the boards in sub-space.

"I'm coming, Linda."

"He's got your blaster. He's . . . I can see you now, Lidd."

There was a roar and a flash up ahead. Something streaked at Liddell through the gray-void. Instinctively, he moved aside. It was a beam of raw energy from the blaster and he wondered what would have happened if it had struck him.

He gasped in surprise.

The blaster beam did not fade. It hovered near him. Wondering, he touched it. It was a jagged bolt ten feet long and felt solid as a shaft of steel. Another natural law, Liddell thought. Snafu here. Because the energy beam of the blaster had been transformed instantly into matter. Shrugging, Liddell grasped the beam — which although it seemed as solid as steel had utterly no weight. With it he swam through

the changeless gray murk.

All at once he could see them up ahead, Short and Linda, floating there, two tiny figures a few hundred yards in front of him. Short's blaster roared again — and the roaring was still another violation of natural law. Another beam streaked out and flashed by Liddell. Again it solidified. Ignoring it, Liddell swam forward with the first beam. He began to feel like Zeus wielding a thunderbolt.

He waited until he was quite close to Short and Linda, until Short fired the blaster once more. Then he hurled his thunderbolt.

Short howled with rage and darted away, triggering the blaster again. But this time Liddell was on him before he could take careful aim. Dimly, Liddell was aware of Linda hovering near, touching the thunderbolt gingerly.

Then all his attention was centered on Jason Short. They were fighting for their lives, fighting tooth and nail, where fighting or any physical activity should have been impossible. But what did the edicts of science matter when Short slammed a hard left hook against Liddell's jaw, staggering him spilling him backward through the gray murk?

Short followed up his advantage and lunged after Liddell, straddling him weightlessly as they floated

off, finding his throat with strong fingers, applying pressure.

HE drove Short off him with two left jabs, snapping the bigger man's head back. Short was like a bulldog, though.

Slowly, the fingers around Liddell's throat released their pressure. In a world with no air and where no air was necessary, the choking pressure hadn't damaged Liddell, but his throat ached from constriction alone. He drove Short off him now with lefts and rights to the head. They were weightless, but they hurt. He couldn't explain it, no more than he could explain the sudden transmutation of the blaster's energy beam to solid matter. It was one of the unknown natural laws of sub-space, that was all.

Presently, he was aware that Short no longer fought but hung there in sub-space with his arms slack. He drove a few more left hooks and right crosses into the face floating so near his own, then swam back and clear.

Short hung there, suspended.

"But how," Linda gasped, "how did you ever —"

"Automatic control. I came after you."

"How will we ever get back?"

Liddell looked at his wrist-chrono. "In fifteen minutes, the automatic control picks us up and brings us

back. Are you all right?"

"He didn't hurt me. He didn't have time."

They waited there in sub-space in each other's arms. When, fifteen minutes later, they began to shimmer, Liddell grabbed the unconscious Short's hand and the three of them shimmered together into normal space.

Liddell went to the arsenal and secured Short with arm and leg irons. By the time he called through to Luna outbound with his explanatory message, the escaped killer had regained consciousness but maintained a grim silence.

"You know," Liddell told his wife, "one thing good's going to come of this. I mean, besides recapturing Short."

"Such as what?"

"Such as science always regarded sub-space only as a medium of transfer. But with some of its unusual properties, I'll bet a few first-rate resorts can be built out there."

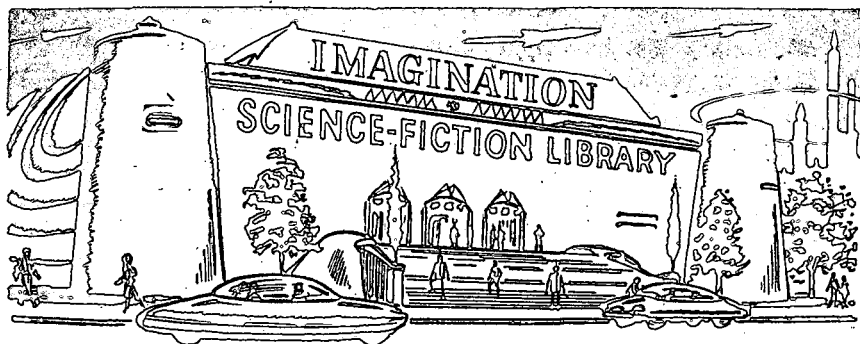
"You — you're crazy," Linda said, but smiled.

"And what's more —"

"Let me finish for you, darling. What's more, if they're going to build any resorts out there, you're the man to build them. Right?"

"Right," said Liddell, before he kissed her.

THE END



— REVIEWING CURRENT SCIENCE FICTION BOOKS —

Conducted by Henry Bott

Hard cover science fiction is booming and many fine novels and anthologies are available at all bookstores or by writing direct to the publishers. Each month IMAGINATION will review one or more — candidly — as a guide to your book purchases.

A WAY HOME

by Theodore Sturgeon, 334 pages, \$3.50, Funk & Wagnalls Company, New York, N. Y.

This anthology edited by Groff Conklin—whose taste in anthologies seems unfailing—is a first-rate piece of Sturgeoniana. From “The Huckle is a Happy Beast” to “Meh-who’s Jet” and through nine other delightful tales plus Conklin’s engaging introduction, there is sheer dynamic Sturgeon cleverness exhibited on every page.

While science-fiction needs no apologists, I’ll never understand why Sturgeon doesn’t do something with the serious novel. He certainly has the talent.

Not in one single story of this group is it possible to detect the cardinal sin of most s-f writing—no matter how trivial the story,

characterization is complete. There is an aliveness in every figure who speaks. In a pithy paragraph, Sturgeon delineates a culture.

About the only criticism one can make of the book is that the stories are of too recent a vintage—the last decade—but that’s true of most anthologies. It doesn’t matter.

For my taste, “Unite and Conquer” is probably the best story in the book. Sturgeon’s premise that men will unite only when *all* are threatened is certainly reasonable—witness today. Granting this, what if someone were able to threaten the Earth, some anthropophile (to coin a word) who decided men must cease fighting. The story is wonderfully handled. A must for your reading.

POINT ULTIMATE

by Jerry Sohl, 244 pages, \$2.75, Rhinehart and Company, Inc., New York, N. Y.

Jerry Sohl has written some entertaining fiction—remember “Costigan’s Needle?” Unfortunately this is not Jerry at his best.

The Soviets have won the war thanks to their missile-proof barrier and they now occupy the United States, keeping the inhabitants under subjugation by the expedient of sowing a disease the prevention of which requires monthly booster shots. Naturally some are immune to this form of national blackmail and are able to form an effective underground. You take it from

there. The characters are thin, there is a light leavening of adventure, a spot of titillation—and that’s the book. Just average reading fare.

Jerry Sohl is not such a bad writer that he shouldn’t be read, but I wish he’d spare us these hackneyed efforts when it is possible for him to do a much better job. I suspect the lack of plot had something to do with this one although that certainly isn’t the ultimate point—no pun intended.

A better estimate of Sohl can be gotten from his “Costigan’s Needle” or the “Altered Ego.” Read these for genuine interest.

NOT THIS AUGUST

by C. M. Kornbluth, \$2.95, 190 pages, Doubleday & Company, Inc. Garden City, New York.

Run, repeat, run—don’t walk, to your nearest bookseller, and pick up this speedy, utterly captivating novel! Its theme is unpleasant, but when you’ve finished it, you’ll enjoy paying next year’s tax installment.

In gripping dramatic prose, moving every instant, Kornbluth describes a United States beaten and occupied by Communist victors. But he doesn’t attempt to create this grim picture in terms of strategists and historians. You live the occupation through the eyes and thoughts of a farmer.

There isn’t a dull moment in the book. Pick it up and you’re caught before you can put it down. I found myself unable to leave it.

America hasn’t known a conqueror—and let’s hope it never will—but this is how it would be if . . .

Fortunately the spark of revolt never dies no matter how intolerable the conditions and usurpers learn that it is one thing to conquer us and another to hold us.

From atomic bombings to food ration tickets, the thousand irritations of a shattered economy, the impossible traitors—these things Kornbluth paints with such graphic realism that the hair rises on the back of your neck as you visualize this terrible “maybe.”

In some respects, the convincing detail of the book reminds me of the better stories of atomic bombings, those few which manage to relate the event to you. This is one of the best pieces of science fiction written in the last five years.

Letters from the Readers

MORE ACTION STORIES!

Dear Bill:

I have read *Madge* since its inception in 1950, and have been a subscriber for the past two years; therefore I can say without reservation that your October issue was one of your best. There wasn't a bad story in the lot. I especially enjoyed the lead novel, ES PERCIP. I haven't read many stories by Stephen Marlowe, but after reading that novel I certainly hope to see more of his work!

I know that your new policy of publishing action-adventure science fiction will make your sales surpass even *Madge's* former glory! To steal an idea from a letter to a British stf magazine, most stf readers want SCIENCE FICTION, not Science FICTION, nor SCIENCE Fiction. I might add that I certainly am in favor of the colored interior illustrations, as in the December issue, just arrived and not yet read. Getting back to the October issue, I think the cover it sported was one of Terry's best ef-

forts—far superior to his wasted one on the July issue. Keep up the fanzine reviews and letter section; they give *Madge* something very few stf magazines possess; personality.

Eddie Robinson
3005 Arlington Ave.
Riverside, Calif.

Glad you liked the Marlowe novel, Eddie. You'll be pleased to know that Steve's got a new one coming up shortly! Action? Adventure? Man, we plan to give you just that! Plus the added ingredient of true wonder — the panorama of limitless space and time. Stick with us and see wh

STILL FRIGHTENED!

Dear Mr. Hamling:

Just had to write you after reading Dan Galouye's DEADLINE SUNDAY in the October issue of *Madge*. As the mother of two small children, I'm now having a terrible time—I'm having nightmares! No story has ever hit me so hard. I guess that later on I'll like the

story, but right now it's bothering the heck out of me!

I like all of your issue this time—even the cover—very nice!

Another thing I had to write you about was Mr. Rowe's letter in the October reader section. I doubt that I'll ever be called a security risk, but frankly, I'm getting scared. One of the main propaganda points used by the U. S. today is communism's idea of guilt by association. Have you read about the young man being refused a commission in the Merchant Marine service because his mother was a communist? Isn't that guilt by association? Who knows, maybe in a few years my husband won't be able to get a job because I wrote this letter! 1984 is less than 30 years off!

Mrs. A. W. Clark
Box 426
College, Alaska

The Galouye story, of course, was not a "shocker type" but carried a terrific emotional impact. We're glad you liked it—and you really did, even if it does scare you! . . . That young man you mention finally received his commission, proving that "1984" would have a tough time arriving in the USA. We may make mistakes in this country but we're not above admitting them, and what's more important, correcting them wlh

FAKE URANUS?

Dear Bill:

The October *Madge* was fine, with one exception. The exception I speak of was THE LAST PLUNGE by S. J. Sackett.

There are a number of things wrong with the story. The generally accepted picture of Uranus differs considerably from Sackett's imaginary Uranus.

To point out an example (one of the many) "A Guide to the Planets" by Patrick Moore, lists the composition of Uranus as:

1. a 3000 mile thick *gaseous* layer.
2. a 6000 mile thick *ice* layer. (The pressure of the gas above lowers the freezing point of Methane the necessary 4 degrees centigrade from 184 to 180.)
3. a 14,000 mile in diameter rock core.

But, since the correct science of one day is the folly of another, let's just assume that Uranus has an ocean of methane.

This brings in another boo-boo. The story says that the air-lion was the only animal life on Uranus. May I ask how evolution produced him? Did a plant-seed suddenly sprout an air-lion? With bones, fur, and gills of a highly developed animal?

I know you don't intend *Madge* to be a textbook—I wouldn't read it if you did—but if you could would you please try to make me believe the stories could happen? Huh? Please?

Oh yes, what good is a thick coat of fur to an animal with cold blood?

James Burroughs
1075 Calder Ave.
Beaumont, Texas

We bypass the text reference on Uranus simply because any author in science fiction has complete latitude when writing of another plan-

et not yet visited by man. After all, who is to say the author is wrong? However, in answer to your last question, which in essence covers the subject, fur might well be an asset to such a cold-blooded creature as Sackett described. Fur is a good insulator, therefore in the case of the air-lion could have been functioning as a temperature stabilizer. To explain: since the air-lion was cold-blooded it probably reacted as other cold-blooded creatures—its rate of activity depending upon the "warmth" of its surroundings. Conditions on Uranus being relative (as all things in existence are) the air-lion functioned better in the "depths" of the methane where greater pressure meant slightly "higher" temperature. Swimming upward the temperature dropped, therefore the fur acted to insulate its body to retain "warmth". Besides, let's face it, the darned creatures had a very good reason for having fur—it was highly prized by gals on Earth! And a pleased Earth-gal warms the blood! Right?

wlh

A GONE ISSUE, MAN!

Dear Mr. Hamling:

I awoke this morning with a feeling of expectation. Nothing happened until I stepped into the drug-store, when the first thing that stared me in the face was the October issue of *Madge*. Remembering that the magazine had just started its bi-monthly schedule—without advance warning—I bought a copy determined to dislike it—and found that it was the best issue in a coon's age. Man, real terrific!---

The lead novel, *ES PERCIPI*, was good; *THE LAST PLUNGE* made interesting reading, and *DEADLINE SUNDAY*—man! Galouye was really gone on that one! Suspense all the way through! *THE PIONEER*, this was good, but didn't rate with the lead novel or Galouye's story, or with *NO GUN TO THE VICTOR*. This I liked. It had it.

Cover was good, and Luther Scheffy's cartoon on the "HAIRY BEM" was delightful, as always.

Keep it up!

Jon D. Holstine
Kingman, Ind.

Gone, man, we've just started! Watch us! wlh

WELL PLEASED

Dear Bill:

I've never written a letter to the editor before, yet, I've been reading science fiction for years. Perhaps I just don't know what to say—and this is something for a woman—to be at a loss for words!

I've enjoyed *Madge* covers that illustrate a story in the issue; then came the poster-type that told their own story. They were the best ever. What happened to them?

And the cartoons! Thanks very much for giving us a little cheer and chuckles now and then.

Now the stories. Some I like, some I don't, and that is probably the way it should be—you can't please everybody all the time. One thing about *Madge*, I must say: no vulgarity in the stories. Thus you have one well-pleased reader.

Gale Batteiger
1876 N. W. 91st St.

Miami 47, Fla.
The poster covers just didn't prove as popular, Gale. And we always bow to the majority—as shown in the sales chart! Cartoons? Scheffy? Lots more coming up wh

"BIG LIE"?

Dear Mr. Hamling:

I buy and read many different stf magazines every month. I enjoy much of what I read, and sometimes feel that I have wasted 35c. However, as the same magazine pleases me one issue and lets me down another, I don't complain because I merely figure I am paying 70c an issue and usually it is worth it. IMAGINATION has been one of the magazines I usually enjoy more than most.

However, in your letter section in the October issue, referring particularly to your reply to a letter from Byron Rowe, you have overstepped the bounds of free speech and common sense by your attempt to confuse and refute a perfectly clear and logical letter by the technique of italics, faulty reasoning, and the "big lie".

"Security risk" is not a dirty phrase; there are security risks still holding jobs to which they should not be assigned. Oppenheimer has not merely "innocently engaged in conversation with communists over a discussion of the weather" and the fact that Mr. Rowe's statements are "part of what has been said in various segments of the national press" tends to substantiate them, not to hold them up to suspicion.

I would like to suggest that you

continue to select and publish stories of science fiction and leave problems of national security to those who are obviously better qualified.

Harrison F. Ullmann
 Mishawaka, Ind.

We never stated that Oppenheimer discussed the weather with communists. We made a generalized point in the quote you mention, and it happens to be true whether you believe it or not. As to our leaving the problems of national security to those better equipped, we have no intention of taking on the burden. But about the latter point—you say we have many security risks on jobs these days. So who's so well equipped then? Apparently the job isn't being done. Huh? As to overstepping the bounds of free speech, don't be absurd. Are you advocating censorship of thought? One thing we can assure you, there's no censorship in our letter section. Anything discussed here was brought in by the readers . . . not the editor wh

CRUDDY COVER?

Dear Bill:

When the July issue of *Madge* came out I was going to send you a letter informing you that the issue sported the worst cover painting I have ever seen on a science-fiction magazine. It's a good thing I waited though because you really outdid yourself on the October issue. I can say, without fear of contradiction, that Terry has taken the trophy for lousy covers. Come on, Bill, let's get with it. *Madge* has had some great covers in the past. Let's not start using trash.

Re Byron Rowe's letter in the reader section on Oppenheimer. I find myself agreeing 100% with your reply to him. There is one part of his letter I would like to comment on though. To quote: "... and admitted to not even reading the newspapers until he was over thirty." This brands him as a security risk? I can think of many reasons for not reading the newspapers, and if Oppenheimer doesn't care to read them should we crucify him for it?

Oppenheimer is one of America's most brilliant men. He is one of the men who helped put this country at its present height of scientific achievement. It was decided to keep him from any position where he will get his hands on classified information. Seeing that Oppenheimer created much of this classified information, it seems to me that this is going to be a fairly hard task.

Well, that's about all for now except to say that Madge has kept me entertained for years, and I really like her.

Ray Youstra, Jr.
10441 Central Park Ave.
Chicago 43, Ill.

What did you find so objectionable about Terry's Cover on the October issue? We thought it was quite good—most readers did too. But since we aim to please, how about Lloyd Rognan's job this issue? Better? We won't comment further on the Oppenheimer business, unless you readers wish to carry it on, other than to say that we still feel the whole story has not been told . . . with

RAP & GOLD

Dear Bill:

ES PERCIPI in the October issue. I haven't read yet, so can't comment on it.

THE LAST PLUNGE—good yarn. Get Sackett to do more for you.

DEADLINE SUNDAY—I liked because it gave me a thrill to think we could lick any aliens that came around. But, unfortunately, the ending was too predictable.

THE PIONEER—was even better, though the ending left me up in the air!

NO GUN TO THE VICTOR—I think was the best in the issue. Good writing.

I always like INTRODUCING THE AUTHOR, and FANDORA'S BOX is the best feature of its kind in the field. I was intrigued by your discussion of the Science Fiction Theatre on TV in your editorial. Too bad I'm not in the States to enjoy the program!

LETTERS FROM THE READERS—wait a minute and I'll see if I can find anybody to disagree with . . . nope, nobody. However, I will comment on the letter about Rap (Ray Palmer). I like him. He doesn't always pull stunts that are funny, but most of them are. Nice guy. He's just challenged Horace Gold of *Galaxy* to a contest to see if he can run up a better circulation with his *Other Worlds*. I sure hope he wins.—I think Gold prints some pretty sorry stuff these days!

Please keep McCauley busy on covers, and get more of Scheffy's "Hairy BEM" cartoons into the magazine!—The October cover by Terry was the best thing I've seen from him. He did a good job with

the off-beat color scheme. Very effectively used. And the idea was good too.

Hope to see Madge back on monthly schedule soon.

Greg Benford

% Lt. Col. J. A. Benford

Hq. 594th F. A. Bn.

APO 169, New York, N.Y.

McCauley will be along with another cover soon, Greg. He'll be kept busy! . . . That contest you mention between Palmer and Gold should prove to be a very interesting one now that Galaxy has changed distributors—left American News Company and gone over to Kable, the outfit distributing Other Worlds. Must admit we can't fathom why Galaxy switched—unless

Horace just wanted to be in-a position to know Ray Palmer's circulation figures first-hand. Come to think of it, now Ray will know Horace's "closely guarded" figures too. Score one for Palmer on the switch! As to stories—we like the kind being featured in Madge and Tales. We wouldn't trade our brand of science fiction for any other. Simple reason: it's the best . . . wth

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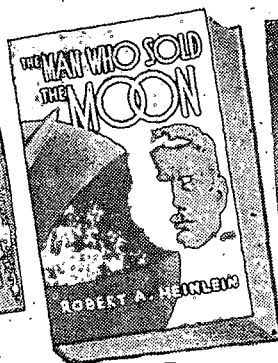
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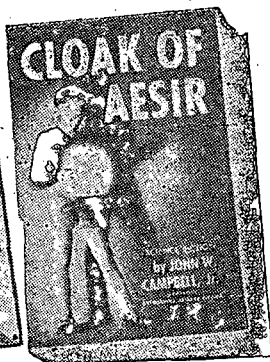
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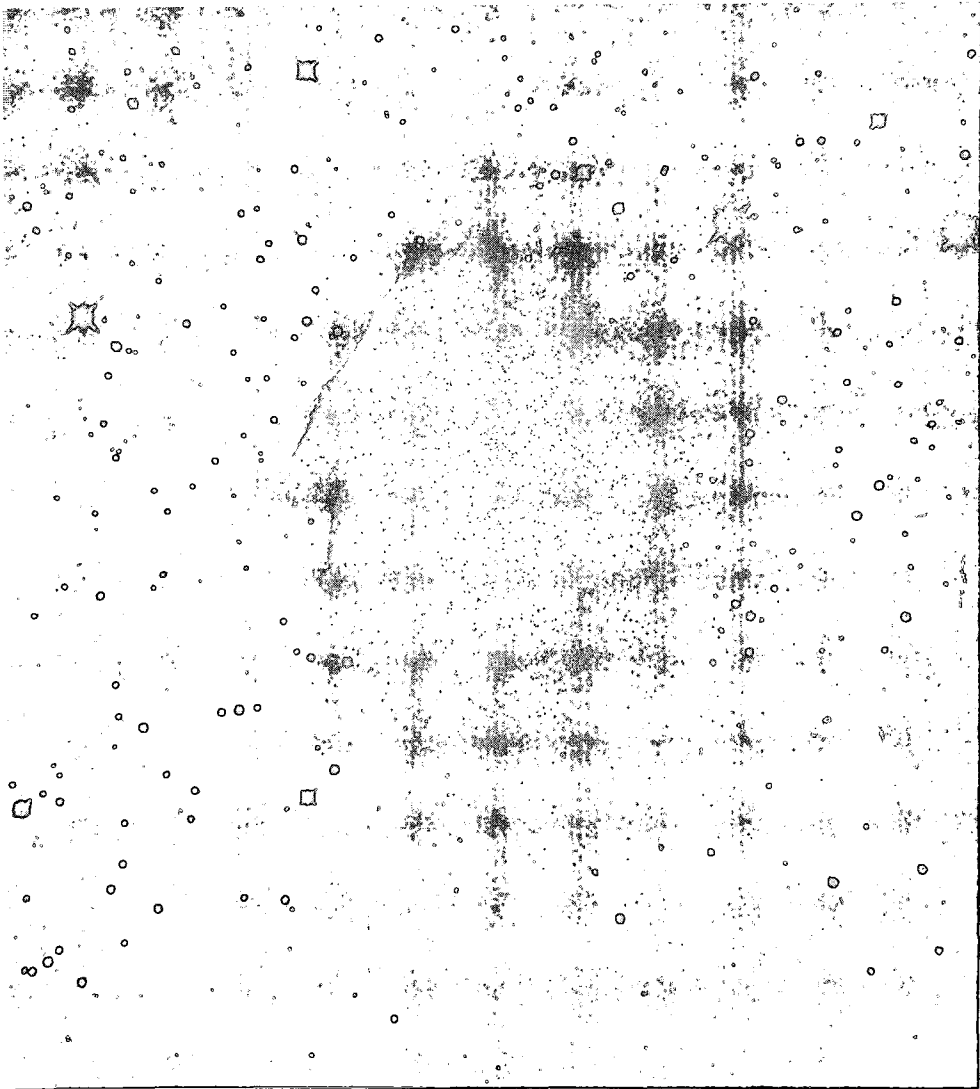
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